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STARBURST



Storybook Classics come to the Screen

DREAM CHILD - Alice in the Eighties

LADYHAWKE - A Flight of Medieval Fantasy

David Hardy's Illustrated-*NEVERENDING STORY*

STARBURST

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The neurotic, animatronic Hatter from Dream Child (see page 24).



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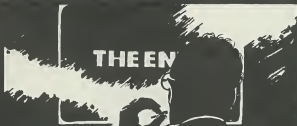
• OPINION •

If whoever thought up the idea of having "The Year of..." had taken out a copyright on the phrase, they would be very rich by now. "The Year of..." theme has been worth thinner than any exploitation movie Director has dared to go with such favourites as "The Night...", or the numbering of the inevitable sequels. I suppose we can look on the bright side: we haven't had "The Year of the Child II" ... yet.

This year we have two contenders that might be of direct interest to the readers of *Starburst* - "British Film Year" and "The Year of British Animation" (they also share the distinction with "Year of the Youth"). So if you are young and a keen follower of British animation then this is definitely your year.

The British Film Year is backed up by an impressive organisation, set up solely to promote itself, British films, Directors, technicians and various artists over the next twelve months. Their aim is to entice you from watching the latest video release in the safety and comfort of your own home, to venture out into the dark unknown of the local cinema. Their hope, at the end of the 'year', is to increase cinema attendances by up to seven per cent. To this end a great deal of the resources will be concentrated on the provinces through the agency of Roadshow (see page 10), which will be supported by local groups interested in film. I was told by one of the organisers that film attendance in London is healthy, but beyond that it is in desperate need of a boost.

As David Puttnam, the Director of British Film Year put it, BFY is about business not art. And it is this approach



that seems to unite the diverse areas of production and exhibition under the one title British Film Year. Cinemas who seem only to be able to fill their seats with highly promoted blockbusters, such as the string of science fiction and fantasy films that we have 'enjoyed' over the last few years, have no allegiance to a national product.

The video trade would seem to be in the same boat; yet the irony is that the best form of promotion a film release on video can hope for is that it did well at the box office.

TECHNICIANS, TALENT AND TAX

British technicians and studios who enjoy a high reputation and full order books are in danger of the work moving out of this country due to recent Government changes in its tax policy. So, over the next year the British Film Industry will be waiting to find out if the movie moguls have come and will continue to come to Britain for the talent or the tax concessions.

And, as for 'The British Film Industry' producing a distinctive indigenous product, the 'Industry' has rarely ex-

isted as such since the pioneering days of the early filmmakers at the turn of the century. Yet the term re-emerges every decade and is spoken of in an optimistic tone, highlighting one or two mildly successful films as the new British film, which seems to herald some renaissance in the home grown product.

Australia has a more recognisable film industry, and the reason for this has been the Government policy of supporting/subsidising film productions. We are then left to ask, if, without proper Government backing, all this promotion of a British Film Year is in vain? Are we experiencing a change in viewing habits, away from their theatrical setting and into the home? If so, this would mean that British Film Year, with its hope of increasing film attendance, is futilely bucking the trend.

The cinema, will undoubtedly always be with us, but probably ultimately as a minor venue for films. It will, however, be a venue that will always find me queuing for the experience of watching a film alone in the darkness, in some cold, run-down cinema.

Richard Ashford

• LETTERS •

TRIPEDS

I felt I must write after reading a Starburst letter praising the "excellent" series *Tripods* in issue 79. *Tripods* is a good name for it because it is *tripe*!

I am amazed that anyone could actually think *Tripods* is good. The BBC must be hard-up for programmes; they are basically showing yet another costume drama (from the persistent 18th Century), adding some much less than "less than convincing" special (which they were not) effects, throwing in some synthesised music and calling it a new science fiction fantasy series. As for the acting, well, "of a very high calibre" it was not, although, I admit, I may have blinked and missed it; the drama students at my local college could act better than that and they are pathetic!

I wouldn't be surprised if the whole series cost a quid a week to produce!

P. Gale,
Bournemouth,
Dorset.

TREK TRIVIA

Now let's stop kidding around and get down to business, a joke is a joke but this time you've gone too far. I am referring to issue 79 of your magazine and more specifically, to Sally Gary's amazing ramblings on *Star Trek*. I mean is she really serious? I quote:

"... though Spock's parents were mentioned in the third broadcast episode of the show, The Corbomite Maneuver - Spock compares the face of Balok with that of his father! - we never did get to meet them until episode 44, *Journey to Babel*.

"Still on the subject of Spock, we come to the origin of the famous Vulcan Nerve Pinch. In the script..."

Can I believe my ears? Can she actually be serious? I would like to remind her that *Star Trek* is a TV show, only a TV show. Which is entertain-



Above: Time for a repeat? Adam Adamant (Gerald Harper) in a spot of bother in *To Set a Deadly Fashion*.

ment, made into some entertaining movies, that's all; nothing else. I always thought John Brosnan was being harsh in his condemnation of the series, but with this sort of pompousness I tend to agree with him.

Star Trek is just not worth this kind of discussion, and please, please, spare us from her threatened discussion of the second season. On second thought, do; good laughs are hard to come by these days.

Nicholas Hill,
Nunthorpe,
Cleveland.

TV CONNOISSEUR

Issue 79 of your magazine is one of the best that I have read. It is refreshing to see a recognition of the other fields of SF, fantasy and horror on television as the emphasis prior to that issue seemed to lean heavily towards the film side of things.

As such this issue was very much a return to the early days of Starburst. I hope that future issues will maintain a diversified mix of all these fields with equal emphasis on each and preference given to neither.

Onto the issue itself: the *Star Trek* feature was suitably colourful and interesting, if in places it did seem like a potted version of Alan Asherman's compendium. As to the film series; I feel it will need some new characters and situations to make up for the loss of the ship, or are we to assume from Doctor Gary's last statement that the Enterprise will be back?

The *Outer Limits* article was extremely informative and convinces me that it is due for a repeat. Sadly "repeat" is not applicable to *Doomwatch* or *Adam Adamant*, two series that I am not old enough to remember. Still, I assume that there

is nothing to stop the few remaining episodes of each being screened. It is a pity to think that so much television history has been destroyed, never to be viewed by future generations.

Finally, your *Tripods* feature was equally informative, but the Doctor Who season preview had nothing new to say to readers of the venerable Time Lord's own monthly magazine.

Overall then a good issue and one that bodes well for the future. I just hope that you can maintain (or surpass) this standard.

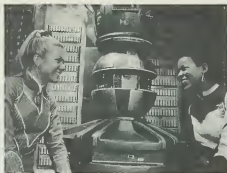
Mark Stone,
Leasingham,
Lincolnshire.

INVADERS!

I feel I must take issue re Richard Holliss's remarks concerning Roy Thinnes (*Starburst* 78) in *The Invaders*. I think Roy Thinnes is a very fine actor and is very good in

the role. He comes over as being splendidly virile, possessing the necessary qualities to portray David Vincent as someone who has suffered much personal loss, in his endeavours to convince the world of the threat of an alien invasion. He is far from "wooden" and I particularly liked his performance in *The Experiment* with guest star Roddy McDowall and *The Innocents* with Michael Rennie; both provided him with plenty of scope for some first-rate acting. This series was very popular when it was first released; Roy Thinnes put a great deal of effort into promoting the show and much of its success can be directly attributed to him personally. Whilst every one of the forty-three episodes made was not a masterpiece, I feel the series has been very underrated of latter years and is certainly equal to *Star Trek* in its appeal; all the scripts are unwaveringly intelligent and well handled. I am glad that the BBC are re-showing it again.

The producers of "V" should consider viewing *The Invaders* again, it avoids all the pit-falls that seem to be dogging the new television series. I was very disappointed to learn that "V" ranks only 38th in the American ratings, and has not been anything like the success that was expected of it. Rumors of over-acting by Jane Badler, too large a cast and unconvincing portrayals of alien beings, seem to abound. I do hope that as it is the only new science fiction television series being made at present, "V" can be saved



Above: Better than "V"? Blake's Seven's Glynis Barber (currently crime-fighting in *Dempsey and Makepeace*) and Josette Simon

before it is cancelled.

Again unlike Richard Holliss (*Starburst 77*) I do not think *The Tripods* can be referred to as science fiction. Certainly I cannot see how he can compare it with *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7*. It is very much a childrens programme, concentrating more on the attractive scenery than any action. The matt drawings behind some of the scenes are so obvious, it reminds me of the dreadful special effects we saw in some of the early 1950s science fiction films; I thought we had come a long way since then. To say that its acting and execution are better than *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7* is unbelievable. Who says it is popular anyway? I have read no good reports of it anywhere, when it was reviewed on *Did You See?* it had a very luke-warm response; I agreed entirely with the comments of the panel. I sincerely hope that

the spectacular effects promised for the second and third season are better than the first; they certainly could not be much worse. Why the BBC have pushed this show and yet refused to make any more *Blake's 7* I shall never know, no wonder they are losing popularity with the viewing public.

Whilst writing to you may I put in a plea for more television coverage. I appreciate that there is not much new science fiction on at the moment, but you could devote an article to *The Invaders*; it must be new to many younger people, as it is some years since it was last on television.

Mrs M.A. Mason,
Beauseale,
Warwick.

CRITICAL COMMENT

I've been reading *Starburst* for well over 50 issues and I must congratulate all in-

volved for maintaining the consistently high standards involved.

However, over the past few issues I've noticed what I regard as a declining in these standards. Now don't get me wrong, but I love this magazine and as a dedicated follower of the genre I just thought I should offer my views.

Tony Crawley's column seems to have been halved in content but still takes up some four pages. Furthermore, his column, as indeed most of the columns of late, seem to favour a multitude of monochrome stills in preference to hard informative text.

Even John Brosnan's column is a shadow of its former self, and is no longer as vigorous as it once was. On the plus side Barry Forshaw's column certainly deserves expansion as does Sally Gary's.

With regards issue 78 in particular. The Salkind interview: how anyone can listen to this man and retain their sanity is a feat without compare! And then, using up a goodly portion of the letters column as an ego-trip for an apprentice film-maker who is looking for an easy way out of research; doesn't anybody write decent letters anymore.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this letter and hope it will be taken in the spirit in which it is offered, concerned constructive criticism.

Looking forward to issue 100 and further ...

Philip Martyn,
Tum,
Eire.

FLICKERS by Tim Quinn & Dicky Howett

EDWARD P. SLOTH film critic
and KEVIN from the YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT SCHEME....



AYE, LAD. 40 YEARS I'VE BEEN IN THIS BUSINESS, AND OVER THAT TIME I'VE BUILT UP A LONG LIST OF IMPORTANT CONTACTS...

YOU HAVE TO BE IN TOUCH WITH THE PEOPLE IN THE KNOW. I LIKE TO THINK I'VE GOT MY HANDS ON THE VERY PULSE OF THE FILM WORLD. IF ANYTHING'S HAPPENING, I'M THE FIRST TO KNOW!



HERE'S ONE OF MY MOST RELIABLE CONTACTS NOW....



KEEP IT UNDER YOUR HAT, KEV. BUT MRS SPARRT HERE IS THE WOMAN WHO CHARGES FOR THE HAIRDRESSER WHOSE SISTER LIVES NEXT DOOR TO THE WIG MAKER WHO SUPPLIES THE MAN WHO MAKES THE OPERATING POLES USED ON YODA. WHAT'S THE LATEST ON STAR WARS 4?



ony Crawley's THINGS TO COME

And now for . . . Monty Gremlin?

Waiter! There's a python in my gremlins! Sssh, sir – or everybody'll want one.

They'll have to wait. The witty, charming, *sougné* Ned Welsh Terry Jones, Director of the best Monty Python films, pride of Colwyn Bay, acknowledged expert on Chaucer, Rupert The Bear, real ale, ecology, Brian's life (well, he was Brian's Mum), Mr Cressote's diet and, in his spare time, a self-confessed seller of ladies' underwear – and about the only Python capable of locating the Jones homestead given the perverse street-numbers of his South London area – has his dance card filled for the year. Thanks to his Hollywood fans. And his son, Bill.

Steven Spielberg has asked Terry to write *Gremlins II* . . . Jim Henson is working with him on *Labyrinth*, a form of *Dark Crystal* sequel . . . And Terry hopes to direct a film of his children's book, *Eric The Viking*. That's where eight-year-old Bill comes in. *Eric* was written for Bill, just as *Fairy Tales* was designed for his sister, Sally, 10. With Jones The Python, children's books tend to mean books for his children. He's finding it tough, writing his third as he hasn't a third child.

The mind does tend to boggle at what Terry might throw up for Amblin's second encounter with *Gremlins*. Could be splendid. But Spielbergian . . . ? We'll see. Perhaps! The project is simply being chatted about for now. As his Monty mates once said of him, Terry is equally at home in the cutting-room, dressing-room or men's rooms . . . "I never wanted to be rich and famous," he says. "My ambitions have always been centered around making things. So, being in a situation where I can make things and people give me money for it, is really fun."

QUIZ: Okay then, name the films directed by Terry Jones . . .

release, such as *KGB – The Secret War*, and the just completed *chiller*, *The Supernaturals*. They won't be the last we hear of Sandy. "People like me don't go down the tubes," says Howard. "We've lived through more war stories than most, and our experience equips us with pencil, paper and the pure adventure to be back in the business."



Above: A scene from *Rock and Rule*, animated by the Canadian Nelvana combine, the unit slated to realise George Lucas's *Ewoks* and *Droids* for Saturday morning TV fare.

Loony Lucas Toons!

It's more than a year since Lord Lucas said he was talking about a year off. About time George got back in harness, right? Rumours continue zapping around his galaxy about *Indy Jones III* and a fourth *Star Wars* – both, apparently dependent on Spielberg's availability, a commodity he has scant excess of. George Lucas, however, seems somewhat more preoccupied with his Disney fixation. First, there was his unctuous televisual movie *Caravan of Courage*, designed to appeal to the six-year-old. And the next Lucas step for mankind is, I'm afraid, no more cheerworthy. More televisuals – in cartoon form this time. Same for another ABC-TV kidvision Saturday morning series *Droids*: The Adventures of R2D2 and C-3PO.

That's good news for Tony Daniels – the shows should keep him in voice-over work – but hardly anything for the rest of us to get excited about. I've nothing against cartoons, not even kiddie-toons, but I'd prefer Lucas to risk a few of his zillions on filming some *Asimov* or *Vonnegut*. I mean it can't be long now before we have a Lucasworld leisure park. *Skywalker City*. . . *Ewokland*. . . *Chewieville*? Admittedly, he is also concerned with Jim Henson's *Labyrinth* but George . . . where's the beef?

I have to say that the animation work for *Ewoks* and *Droids* is in excellent hands. Lucas has passed the assignment to Toronto's Nelvana combine, the makers of that great animation feature, *Rock and Rule*, and before that, of course, the short-lived *Star Wars* tele-animation show. Nelvana, ironically, has lately moved into live-action work with a kid series that must be right up George's nostalgia street: *Rocket Boy*. Not quite as straight as the Lucas shows sound. Dave Thomas plays the single most inept hero in the heavens, amid lots of SPFX and guests like Rick Moranis and John Candy.

Boss Man Cometh

"The most complicated visual effects movie ever made." That's the word on *Polygeist II*. It would be a rash promise from anyone other than the Oscar-winning: SPFX ace who worked on the original when boss of the ILM shop. Richard Edlund is now boss of Boss – the Boss Film Corporation, which as the title implies, is aiming to pro-

duce films as well as effects. (When he gets the time, that is). The *Polygeist* sequel, not connected with Spielberg or Amblin but with the original screenwriters, will have 200 effects shots – about the same as *Edlund's* elves supplied for *Ghostbusters* and 2010. "Yes," nods the Boss man, "but of unrivalled complexity."

Sounds good. Director selected for the movie is Britain's Brian Gibson.

Sandy's Sunk!

Genial giant Sandy Howard, Producer of *Meteor*, Island of Dr Moreau, Death Ship, etc., has filed for bankruptcy in Hollywood, after a streak of bad luck – and, it has to be said, bad movies. He puts most of his troubles down to the five months he was stuck in Greece on a manslaughter rap after an explosion on the set of *Sky Riders* (1970) killed one man and seriously injured eleven more people. Howard then made "the fastest deals (he) could" to help his position; one of those deals was for Dr Moreau. Then, the prolonged shoot of *Meteor* didn't help financial matters. Ironically, he'd just been coming good with films like *Angel*, and has a fistful of others awaiting

Telexports

Our trade gap can't be all that bad... *The Prisoner*, all 17 hours of it, is being issued on cassette in America. Slowly. Two or three shows at a time, four times a year. Not many tele-series work on video, but Chicago entrepreneur Waleen Ali has high hopes with Patrick McGoochan's cult market. And to bump up sales, Ali's hoping to edit a bunch of extracts together as a video-clip... *Blake's Seven* is also alive and well on some 138 local TV stations over there.



Above: Blake's six-plus-Zen makes *Seven* boldly continues on US TV.

Summer Splash

Ron Howard's first film since *Splash* must be looking good. Cocoon has gone through a rapid change of programming and will open during America's summertime blitz instead of Christmas. As of this particular hour, Ron's SF item—featuring among others the kids of Raquel Welch and Tyrone Power—is going through the SPFX wringer at ILM, before he moves on to directing *Kidd for his old Happy Days* mate, Henry Winkler—a big Producer these days.

Future Upheaval

Trouble at mill on the Amblin set of *Back To The Future*... The film's leading time-tripper, youngster Eric Stoltz, has been fired and replaced by one of the Family Ties TV team, Michael Fox. It happens all the time in movies except (a) it's not happened before on an Amblin project, and (b) it rarely happens, unless due to injury, as late as exactly half-way through production. Stoltz had been working for six weeks before getting the chop—with six weeks still to go. Now the film directed by Spielberg's mate, Bob Zemeckis, might not be ready in time for its summer U.S. premiere date. Difficult, if not impossible, for Bob to re-shoot a wasted six weeks' footage in the six weeks left scheduled for the shooting of the final six weeks... Unless the boss is going to lend a hand.

Spielberg is Executive Producer of the picture along with, as usual, Frank Marshall and Kathy Kennedy. But the Stoltz sacking is Zemeckis' decision, alone. He'd been impressed by Stoltz in the upcoming Peter Bogdanovich film, *Mask*, tested and okayed him, and once Eric completed the Emerald espionage thriller in Paris, he reported for time-tripping. Six weeks later—out on his butt (unpolstered by a financial settlement). "His performance," said Zemeckis, "was not consistent with the original concept."

Films of the Year

Bit late, I know, but should mention that *Temple Of Doom* cleaned up almost everywhere as top film of 1984. Except in America where Spielberg was knocked off the No. 1 spot (for the first time since... oh, 1941) by *Ghostbusters* (there is no accounting for

American tastes) and in West Germany where, inevitably, the local *Neverending Story* proved the champ. *Gremlins* came third in the U.S., by the way, and after only four weeks' release, Eddie Murphy's *Beverly Hills Cop* took fourth position, easily trouncing *Star Trek*, *Romancing The Stone* and *Splash*.

Statistics

The new Bond movie, *A View To A Kill*, is the 14th from Cubby Broccoli, the 16th overall—from three 007s and a whole bunch in *Casino Royale*. Not much compared with, say, Mickey

Rooney's 16 *Andy Hardy* films, or the 18 capers made by burly Bud Spencer and pretty-boy Terence Hill. But the true champ series is Tokyo's Tora-san films, about a lugubrious Walter Mittyish type who never gets the girl in the end. Actor Koyoshi Atsumi has completed 34 of those! He's closing on the Tarzan record of 42 films... but thanks to 8 vine-swingers.

Yorkshire SF

If Russell Mulcahy could win his first feature, *Razorback*, on the strength of his *Hungry Like The Wolf* rock video with Duran Duran, why not an SF break for guitarist John Taylor, too? Well, it came to pass, as they say. Taylor turns actor (or close) in the pilot of an Anglo-American SF series called *Timeslip*. His partners include Jeff Harding and Made Max II warrior woman, Virginia Hey. They're stuck fast in an eerie 21st Century, fighting acid gas and other forms of intruder-suffocation in what producer Colin Callender calls a thriller "about how people relate to each other in an environment completely computerised and automated". (Like McDonalds...?) Shot over here, the show has certain shades of 1984 and THX 11:38, not to mention every futurist's main touchstone, *Franz Kafka*. It also has a lot of hopes riding on it... for the Co-Producers, Hollywood's Cinemax and Yorkshire TV. If it earns the bucks on America's HBO cable-channel, it will lead to more time slippage numbers (all new scripts, no re-tread) under a Twilight Zone-style banner.

Russell Moves...

Incidentally, Russell Mulcahy—a bigger hit, personally, than his film at the Avoriaz festival—won't have much time for video-clips soon. Apart from working with the rest of his vidirectors on the next *Heavy Metal* movie, he kicked off his own Hollywood contract with *Highlander* in April. Subject: adventure, more romantic than fantasy. Settings: Scotland, London and New York. Period: Oh just four centuries...

Sachs Appeal

We've not seen much from writer-director William Sachs lately. And depending on your opinion of *The Incredible Melting Man* (1978) and poor Dorothy Stratten's *Galaxina* (1980), that's a good/bad thing. Actually, we do see his work. Quite often without knowing it. He's one of Film City's revered film doctors, hired to re-cut, sometimes re-shoot—or as most of his clients say, rescue—other people's movies. He made his reputation in this field with Joe back in 1970 and among other films he's worked on as movie-medico are *The Wicked Die Slow* and *Beyond The Door*. Most recently, he re-shot half of *Exterminator II* in 13 days, once director Mark Buntzman had left. Well, Sachs has had enough of that and is getting back to turning out his own stuff. He has a three-film deal with Cannon Films—and a Sachs appeal horror special is also being warmed up on his back burner.

ony Crawley's THINGS TO COME.

Festival Winners

There's been the usual plethora of film festivals since last month's column... Yorktown, Lubeck, Banff, Chicago, Boston, Rio, Leipzig, Katowice, Turin, Hawaii, New Delhi. Even Havana. I can't cover 'em all; Suffice to run through the prize-winners of the two big French events allied to our favourite genre.

The top Golden Unicorn award of the 14th Paris festival went to David Blyth's New Zealand shaker, *Death Warm Up*. The jury favoured Japan's *Warriors from the Wind*, the critics preferred (wisely) *Blood Simple*, and the public (quite a vociferous Rocky Horror-like crowd at this event) cheered, stamped and stomped mightily for Canada's *Of Unknown Origin*. Being busy enough to have two films competing, Peter Weller somewhat obviously collected Best Actor for the Canadian film and his terrific Buckaroo Banzai. Frances McDormand was Best Actress in *Blood Simple* (of course). Four guys from Hong Kong earned the SPFX nod for *Warriors from the Magic Mountain*, Brian Taggart's *Of Unknown Origin* was Best Script and the music trophy, from the Miklos Rozsa Association, went to John Addisons's *Strange Invaders* score.

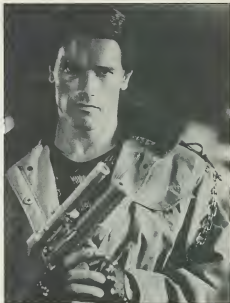
High up on the ski-slopes of Avoriaz, the 13th fantasy festival had the 'showier' jury - which included John Hurt and was headed by Robert De Niro, no less. After all that Italian in *Godfather II* and 1900, the polyglot (and bearded) Bobby announced the winners on local TV in pretty good French. To cheers all around, James Cameron's *Terminator* ran off with the main prize. De Niro's jurors were apparently Anglophiles and divided their honours between Neil Jordan's *Company of Wolves* and James Dearden's *The Cold Room* - which actress Nicole Garcia kept praising so much you'd have thought she was in it. The public voted for Steve Barron's *Electric Dreams*. The critics went for Wes Craven's *Nightmare On Elm Street* and it's star, Heather Langenkamp, was dubbed Best Actress. No actor award - De Niro's hard to please, see. Tough on Schwarzenegger... or Bud Cort, the voice of Steve Barron's Edgar. Never mind, Arnie - you're starting *Terminator II* any day now.

Worst Fest!

Something akin to a Medieval brothers' festival was recently staged at the University of Nevada - which happens to be in Las Vegas, if you can imagine such a setting for a seat of learning. (Degrees in high-rolling, perhaps?) The Best of the Worst Film Festival was arranged, with tongue well planted in cheek, by the campus film professor, Ray Daniels. He just happened to have produced all the entries, which included... *The incredibly Strange Creature Who Stopped Living and Became A Mixed-Up Zombie*. (Sheena, forshort?) And this guy Daniels is teaching students about film...?

Vista's Vistas

The young company behind the Ellis Island mini-series and John Schlesinger's new espionage hit *The Falcon And The Snowman*, has issued one of those usual Hollywood pronouncements about future product. I get such hand-outs all the time. This combine's into ten for 1985, that one promises a dozen - sometimes the claim is as high as 25. Well this new company, Vista by name, has settled on 15. They probably won't all be made - or not by Vista. But we can hope they stick to their new genre side of things. So far, they've made Tom Holland's *Flight Night*, promise a more SF horror trip with *The Gate* written by Michael Nankin, and require a supernatural monster (and a lotta snow) for *White Out*, from writers Richard Outten and Brian Strassman. One other project which should suit our fancy is Peter Anderjegg's *Timestone*, about a teenager coping with life after his parents are killed in Brooklyn. He gets sent off (to recover) in Ireland, of all places, where he encounters an experience described as 'mystical'.



Above: After pulling off the prize for the best picture at the 13th Avoriaz Fantasy Festival, Arnold Schwarzenegger gears up for *Terminator II*.

Dino is Stoned!

Surprise news. Conan scripter Oliver Stone has more guts than his barbarian. Stone is actually daring to take Dino De Dune to court - in order to direct a movie called *Platoon*. Oliver Stone, who directed one of Mike Caine's horror-period quickies, *The Stone* (1981), alleges he penned Dino's current production, *Year of the Dragon*, for much less than his normal fee, on the condition that Dino would back his *Platoon* number. Dino got his script. Stone didn't get his directing go-ahead. And, if you please, your honour, he'd like \$5 million damages and if you're in agreement, the same again in punitive damages and your order to make Dino go ahead with *Platoon*.

If Stone pulls that off, it would be the first movie to have been forced into production and, in a way, produced by a judge. Sounds like Stone's next script to me.

No. 1 Cassette

Another triumph (if you can stand it) for the Lucasberger team. They may have succumbed to *Ghostbusters* as the biggest money-maker of 1984, but *Indy's* still smilin'. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* has become the first video-cassette in history to sell more than one million copies. And inside one year! America did most of the buying. We did our bit, too. The UK sales of more than 10,000 copies represents half of the movie's overseas vid sales.

Now you may think you've read all that before here. But you have not. I've certainly reported *Raiders* going gold or platinum but cassettes aren't rock albums. Such awards are issued in America for that which America worships - money earned, not the actual number of vids sold. Cassettes like *Dr. No*, *From Russia With Love*... most of the early Bonds, *Omen II*, *Amityville 3D*, *The Changeling*, *Cujo*, *Firestarter*, even *Duran Duran* or *Tom and Jerry Part I* go gold for earning \$1.5 million - if only selling, due to the varying prices, around 37,500 cassettes. The platinum award signifies \$3 million earned

from about 75,000 vids sold of such movies as *Twilight Zone*, *Close Encounters* (Special Edition), *Greystoke*, *Brainstorm*, *The Right Stuff*, *Conan II*, *Mad Max II*, *Octopussy*, *Romancing The Stone*, *Blue Thunder*, *Never Say Never Again*... and ABC's highlights of the L.A. Olympics. None of which come close to *Raiders'* record. Second only to *Indy* is *The Making of Michael Jackson's Thriller* with 800,000 copies sold.

Bradbury TV

We suffered *The Martian Chronicles* on the tube (though never as much as poor Ray did). Standby, then, for something he has a touch more control over — *The Bradbury Chronicles*. This is, obviously, a tele-anthology of Ray's tales, shot in Canada by a pair of companies, including the one run by CHiPS motor-cop Larry Wilcox. William Shatner takes a break from Kirk and Hooker to star in *The Playground*. Rotund (not to say fat) James Coco has the lead in *Marionettes, Inc.* And Canadian hot-shot Nick Mancuso forms part of *The Crowd*. If they click, there will be more.

Asimov Film

After Bradbury, what better than a touch of Isaac Asimov? *Police Academy* Producer Paul Maslansky is preparing Asimov's *Pirates of the Asteroids* as the directing debut of his mate, Zoran Perisic, the Yugoslavian SFFX man-who-made-Superman-fly. The couple first worked together on Jack Cardiff's *The Long Ships* (1964) in Yugoslavia and far more recently on *Return To Oz* at Elstree — which Paul produced when Gary Kurtz bowed to the inevitable and made himself Executive Producer. Although Paul promises (if that is the right word) not one but two sequels to *Police Academy*, he's serious about his films (he has to be, he's bought G. F. Newman's hard-hitting *Right To Know*) and insists his Asimov venture is ready for take-off. I hope so. I am, though, used to Hollywoodians claiming mega-deals for one Asimov story or another. Remember CE3K Co-Producer Michael Phillips' lofty idea of *The Foundation Trilogy*? It never flew...

total total! Admittedly, less tickets were bought, but wouldn't you know it, inflation was up and therefore more money was spent on going to the movies — in the area of \$2.2 billion!



Above: Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner (seen here sand-wiching Bob Zemeckis) gut back together for *Jewel of the Nile*.

Lights...!

Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner are romancing a new stone, *Jewel of the Nile*. After Bob Zemeckis' last year, once again the Director comes from our neck of the woods, *Cujo's* Lewis Teague... Mars is being built on Rome's Diodora sound-stages for David Cronenberg's *Total Recall*, written by Dan O'Bannon... I hope Dave has better luck with his De Laurentis costumes than Richard Fleischer. He suffered *deja vu* shooting *Red Sonja* with extras in costumes from Dick's 1961 film for *Dino, Barabba*... Iceman star John Lone joins Mickey Rourke in Mike Cimino's *Year of the Dragon*... Odd double-bill in New York: *Starman* and *Star 80*!

Camera...!

NBCover yonder given the greenlight to six more Vtales... Joe Morton, aka. *The Brother From Another Planet*, has *Trouble in Mind* for Keith Caradine... And yes, 'twas John Sayles directing Bruce Springsteen's *Born In The USA* video-clip — in New Jersey, where else... The South African government has banned all broadcasting of *Little Shoppe of Horrors* song, *Feed Me*... Arthur Everard is becoming New Zealand's most permissive film censor. After years on the shelf, he's passed *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Exterminator* with no noticeable increase in sale of chainsaws or blow torches...

Akk-Shun!

Romero's 1977 *Martin*. John Amplas, returns in *Day of the Dead*, by George!... Just about all you'll ever need to know about 007, the man, the books, the films is in Raymond Benson's book, *The James Bond Bookside Companion*... H. R. Giger put all his old work for Jodorowsky and Ridley Scott on exhibition in New York under the title *The Dune You'll Never See*... *Psycho II* and, maybe *It* director, Richard Franklin, due back in Sydney for *Razorback* writer Everett de Roche's *Out of the Silence*... Robin Williams still trying for that elusive hit, with *Best of Times* with Kurt Russell and then, *Island Jack* directed by ghostbuster Harold Ramis... A new Italian chiller is called *Mr. Rorret*. That's terror backwards, KO?

QUIZ ANSWER. Terry Jones co-directed Monty Python and the Holy Grail with Terry Gilliam (don't miss his *Brazil*), and directed *Life of Brian* (working title: *Jesus Christ — Lust For Glory*) and *The Meaning of Life*. Oh yeah, there's a lot of life in Terry. He's also the author of *Chaucer's Knight*, the *Ripping Yarns TV series*, with Michael Palin and, also with Mike, Bert Fegg's *Nasty Book For Boys and Girls*, which somehow became *Dr. Fegg's Nasty Book of Knowledge in America*.

Godly Duo

Moscow banned the East German supremo from visiting West Germany last year. But those ancient supreme Soviets aren't objecting to a movie meeting across the damned wall between Moscow and Munich. And so a film called *It's Not Easy To Be A God* will be the first ever Russo-West German co-production this summer. It's a science fiction project adapted from the Novel by the Strugatski brothers. Oleg Fialko, who I gather has a good track record, is

the Director relied upon to visit the West and come home again.

It's some years since we saw *Solaris* (1972), the Director of which, Tarkovsky, went to Italy the other year and didn't go home again, but the Soviets still make a lot of SF movies. Well, they have schedules of 150 movies a year and a further hundred for TV to make to keep some 20 million viewers happy. I know I keep promising this, but I hope to look at a couple of these Russian fantasies in a later issue.

Food For Thought

While British filmgoers continue to disappear (into their own tubes or VCRs), not to mention cinemas and dammitall, films, America continues expanding on all fronts. For example, take their cinemas. Back in 1958, the Yanks had 16,354 screens to choose from. Things looked bad in 1963, when the figure shrunk to 12,650. There's more than ever today — 19,589 of them. As only seems correct, there's more in California than any other state — even Texas comes second, with New York third. Last year more films were made than for many a Hollywoodian year, too — 302 of them, at last count. And that's not the well,

EXTRA

THINGS TO COME

What's new locally? With apologies to Tony Crawley for the appropriation of his column's title – hold on – who's appropriating from whom, this space-to-let will feature, on a fit-to-print basis (ie. irregularly), news on the British, especially the London, scene.

HITTING THE ROAD

If Mohammad won't go to the mountain, then Roadshow will spread the word to the dwindling number of British cinema goers that British Film Year has come. The testament according to the organisers is that "in the 1980's, with the superb new sound and projec-

tion equipment, and with the vast sums being spent by filmmakers on the type of special effects that can only be truly appreciated on the big screen, the cinema can offer a more exciting and rewarding experience than ever before". This confident claim will be brought to people's doorsteps via the Roadshow unit, which will visit 25 cities throughout the country, coinciding with special film events in those cities.

All of this is scheduled to take place between April and October this year, and the part of its programme which should be of special interest to **Starburst** readers is the display of special film arts, such as special effects, make-up and costumes. On the make-up and

special effects side of things, there are exhibitions of Jim Henson's *Dark Crystal*, Neil Jordan's *Company of Wolves* and the upcoming *Return to Oz* directed by Walter Murch (with a little help from a couple of guys named Spielberg and Lucas). Then, if you're interested, there will be demonstrations of filmmaking techniques and a chance to 'meet the stars' and filmmakers themselves at the events.

Roadshow will kick off on the 20th April with a gala event in London, in Leicester Square, where the surrounding cinemas will do their flag waving bit and hold special screenings of British films. From London the Roadshow wends its way across the country as follows:



CANIMATION

Ardent followers of animation, especially of the wonderfully experimental Canadian variety, are in for a treat this May, when Canada House will be holding an animation season featuring "a cross-section of some of the best work of several generations of Canada's animated filmmakers" (Norman McLaren). The official blurb reads "a rare chance to appreciate a wide range of animators' techniques in films with humour, satire and the occasional serious message". But don't let the 'wine tasting' tone of that put you off what

looks like an excellent tour through the art of animation.

The programme (yet to be finalised) will take place at Canada House on Fridays and Sundays in May, starting at 6.30 pm. The organisers have stated that they intend to divide the screenings into five areas, commencing with films produced by Len Lye and Norman McLaren (whose influence and direct role in establishing Canada's animation industry is inestimable). Programme 2 will show some shorts from the National Film Board (NFB), and programmes 3 and 4 the work of various independents, including Al Sen's hilariously absurd *Acting Out*, and two notable features from International Rocketship Limited: the award-winning *Sing Beast Sing* and the recently completed *Anijam* – "a five minute long cartoon produced by 21 world famous animators". The final programme should focus on expatriate animators in Britain.

You'll also be able to take a closer look at the animators' handiwork, as Canada House are presenting an exhibition of stills and cells from the work of various NFB artists represented in the film season. This is not to be missed, as the same exhibition was briefly on display last year at the Potters Bar Animation Festival, and it's a must for technical enthusiasts.

For confirmation of the programme schedule or any further information contact Canada House, Trafalgar Square, London SW1 5BJ. (01) 629 9492 ext. 284.

Above left: "Hitchhike to Anijam" at Canada House, for five minutes of cartoon collaboration.

April		
20th – 21st		London
May		
8th – 11th		Brighton
15th – 18th		Lincoln
25th – 28th		Nottingham
June		
5th – 8th		Hull
12th – 15th		Birmingham
19th – 22nd		Bradford
27th – 30th		Plymouth
July		
3rd – 7th		Liverpool
12th – 14th		Southampton
24th – 27th		Cambridge
August		
2nd – 4th		Portsmouth
8th – 10th		Glasgow
13th – 17th		Edinburgh
20th – 22nd		Aberdeen
26th – 27th		Leicester
31st – 1st		Swindon
September		
4th – 7th		Bedford
11th – 14th		Manchester
18th – 21st		Sheffield
25th – 28th		Cardiff
October		
2nd – 5th		Swansea
9th – 12th		Bristol
16th – 19th		Newcastle
23rd – 26th		Norwich
30th – 2nd		Milton Keynes

For further information contact Keith Howes at the British Film Year on (01) 437 8020.

Ladyhawke

Feature by James Burns



In Hollywood's heyday, the Middle Ages provided fertile ground for a particular brand of romantic fantasy, from the swashbuckling tales of derring-do in the Prince Valiant mould to Robin Hood's Sherwood sagas. Richard Donner's new film *Ladyhawke* sets out to recapture the spirit of those Hollywood adventures, tempering the heroics with a story of doomed love and religious sorcery.

Ladyhawke takes place in Europe at a time when an increasingly corrupted clergy began to use its divine authority to rule an oppressed feudal society. The story relates the quest of two tragically united lovers – Etienne and Isabeau – on their pilgrimage of revenge back to the city of Aquila, to seek out the Bishop who had placed them under an evil enchantment. By day, Isabeau's human form changes into that of a hawk. At dusk,

accordingly, Etienne becomes a grey wolf in the care of Isabeau, now returned to normal.

They are joined on their journey by Phillipe Gaston, otherwise known as "the mouse", a thief with a "heart of gold", who has only recently escaped from Aquila, and Brother Imperious, a reclusive, eccentric friar, and also a previous 'resident' of Aquila.

After much tribulation *en route*, their mission appears destined to fail as the odds against them from both the Bishop's forces and from the dissension within their ranks, seem insurmountable. Etienne is convinced that slaying the Bishop will at least provide some satisfaction, but with this, the lovers' only hope of negating the clergyman's spell – as Imperious explains – will vanish forever. . .

The origins of *Ladyhawke* date back to a famous feudal legend, recorded as early as the 13th century. When producer Lauren Shuler (*Mr Mom*) discovered the tale four years ago, in a script by Edward Khmara, she immediately made *Ladyhawke* her "pet project". Subsequently, the original script was "extensively revised" by Michel Thomas (*The Hunger*) and Tom Mankiewicz (*Diamonds Are Forever*), leaving Khmara (for whom *Ladyhawke* is his screen debut) with a collaborative credit.

Shuler also helped assemble an impressive production lineup, highlighted by Oscar-winning cinematographer Vittorio Storaro (*Reds*, *Apocalypse Now*), and Director/Co-Producer Richard Donner. Donner, of course, is no stranger to fantasy, having helmed several *Twilight Zone* TV episodes, *The Omen* (his first feature), and *Superman - The Movie*. He began his career in the early fifties as an actor, before switching a few years later to the other side of the camera. Since *Superman*, Donner has lensed *Inside Moves*, "a slice-of-life saga", and *The Toy*, a comedy starring Richard Pryor and Jackie Gleason.

Intriguingly, no matter what genre Donner's working in, his basic approach to directing doesn't alter as he explains: "I narrow the entire process of filmmaking to its most simplistic terms. First, there's the script development and the dealmaking. The preparation of a film is like the byplay of lovemaking: meeting a girl and falling in love with her. The actual shooting is just straight out fornication. Then, the editing and post-production, everything right up to the film's release, is the gestation and birth of the baby. Finally, staying with the project through release is like seeing your kid through college."

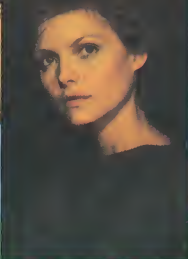
To fabricate *Ladyhawke*'s Middle Ages milieu, Donner and company utilized Rome's Cinecittà Studios, and several lushly photographed Italian locations, including the Apennine Mountains, the Gran Sasso range and the Fiora River. (As a result, the movie is sometimes visually reminiscent of Italy's early sixties "sword and sandal" films, the type that often starred Steve Reeves.) The *Ladyhawke* team also decided to feature few special effects, relying on what they felt was a strong story to satisfy moviegoers.

By opting to make *Ladyhawke* a "subtle fantasy," Donner knew that the majority of the film's thrills would

have to emanate solely from its characters, thereby requiring a superior cast. The stars include Rutger Hauer (*Bladerunner*'s android—Roy Batty, *Nighthawks*) as Etienne Navarre; Matthew Broderick (*War Games*) as Philippe Gaston; Leo McKern (television's *Rumpole of the Bailey*, *A Man for All Seasons*) as Imperius; Royal Shakespeare Company veteran and Tony-award winner John Wood as the Bishop of Aquila (teamed once again with Broderick after playing the eccentric scientist in *War Games*); and Ken Hutchison (*Gandhi*, *Mazda*) as Marquet.

To portray Isabeau, Donner needed an actress who could project not only beauty and a resilient spirit, but a serene mystical quality. He turned to Michelle Pfeiffer, who had previously appeared in *Hollywood Knights*, *Grease 2* and *Scarface*.

Far left: The knight Etienne Navarre vows to find and destroy the enemy who has cast an evil spell on his life. Left: Etienne with Philippe Gaston and Ladyhawke. Below: Isabeau of Aquila. Bottom left: Isabeau is wounded. Bottom right: The walled city of Aquila.





"When I first read *Ladyhawke*," Pfeiffer has admitted, "I thought, 'I can do this.' Then came the awful realization, 'I don't know *anything* about Isabeau.' That's when I got down to the real work: probing the role. . . *Ladyhawke* is stylish, but it's not Shakespeare."

For Donner, *Ladyhawke* actually represents a reunion of sorts. Serving as Executive Producer is Harvey Bernhard (*The Mack*), with whom Donner worked on *The Omen*. When Bernhard went on to produce *The Omen*'s two sequels, *Damien* and *The Final Conflict*, it was Donner who served as Executive Producer. Another *Omen* alumnus on *Ladyhawke* is the aforementioned Leo McKern, who played Burgenhagen, the archeologist.

Ladyhawke is also the closest picture thematically to *The Omen* that Donner has yet undertaken. Although *Ladyhawke* is not as horrifically graphic as *The Omen*'s—which Donner thought was "thrilling and a lot of fun, but not violent"—the picture maintains a consistently grim tone. Oddly, as Donner's comments on *The Omen* suggest, he may not even be aware of this aspect of *Ladyhawke*:

"When you're making a movie the logistics of murder and similar scenes are so involved that by the time you execute them, you don't relate to it the way an audience would. The mechanics of such sequences take away the emotionality."



Top: The Bishop gets his just deserts. Above left: Ladyhawke in her human form, Isabeau. Above: Drama on a frozen lake as Etienne the Wolf falls through the ice.

Much of the violence in *Ladyhawke* is instigated by Etienne Navarre. Clad entirely in black, the erstwhile officer is every inch "the grim avenger". As a result of the attention paid to Navarre's plight, *Ladyhawke* emerges as the best showcase Rutger Hauer has thus far enjoyed in an American-produced film. Although Hauer became a leading man in Dutch cinema in 1968 (starring in movies like *Turkish Delight* and *Soldier of Orange*), Hollywood has usually employed him only as a villain.

"The studios like to pigeonhole you," Hauer explains. "Since I hate to be stereotyped, though, *Ladyhawke* will hopefully change the way the studios think of me. Of course, when you live in a place like Hollywood—as I sometimes do—it's easy to feel that if you want something, all you have to do is go for it. In truth, obviously, that's not the case. At best, you can only do a little to advance your cause. The rest is in the hands of heaven and the cutting room".

For *Ladyhawke*, Hauer became proficient with medieval weaponry. One of the picture's greatest assets, in fact, is that its first third features some of the best swordplay seen since swashbuckling was virtually a Hollywood staple. Such stylization reaffirms *Ladyhawke's* apparent intent to be more in the tradition of celluloid historical adventures, rather than the newer trend of blatant sword and sorcery.

"*Ladyhawke* is an amalgam of themes," Donner clarifies. "It's adventurous, outrageously romantic and pure escapism, which I prefer to films which set out to show how dull everyday life is, and generally succeed! What appealed to me most about *Ladyhawke*, though, and what I hope I've translated well to the screen, is that it's an impossible love story, but one which is ultimately resolved. I'm very attracted to the notion that love can always be resolved, as long as it's true love. I mean, no one can wish for love to die."



Above: Philippe desperately tries to save Isabeau from plunging to her death from a monastery tower. Top right: Isabeau with Etienne in wolf form. Right: The doomed lovers.



Taking the edge off Donner's "adventurous romance" is the murky religious tone that pervades the picture. Not only is the villain a Bishop, but it turns out that Navarre also believes that whatever fate befalls him is the Lord's doing.

Heroes in pictures like this usually realize that the Lord put them on earth to be responsible for their own actions, while striving to operate within God's grace.

Strangely, Etienne's motives aren't always virtuous, and he appears as more than a little self-centred on occasion. At one point in the story, while pondering what should happen to Isabeau if his mission should fail, Navarre even considers murdering her (in her hawk form), believing that, "Perhaps this is what god wants".

Hauer's portrayal itself, while physically impressive, occasionally seems stilted—possibly the result of misdirection by Donner. Clearly miscast, however, is Matthew Broderick, as he has too much of a "1980s face". Even though Broderick's acting is otherwise adequate, such an anachronism prevents the audience from adopting a willing suspension of disbelief, essential for the success of all fantasy endeavours.

Thankfully, the performances of the remaining cast-members are commendable, with Ken Hutchison a particularly menacing standout. Most of the film's technical elements—especially its settings for the fortress of Aquila—are also outstanding.

As a whole, *Ladyhawke* is far from a complete artistic failure. At the least, the picture offers an intriguing, albeit flawed, change of pace from standard movie-fantasy fare. ♦



STARBURST FILM REVIEWS

STARMAN

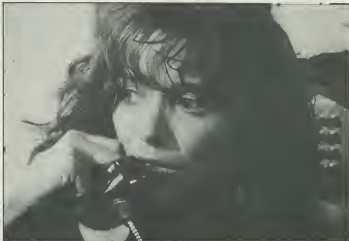
*"Emotionally uplifting...
the best piece of
Carpenter for a while"*

There's a Starman waiting in the sky. He'd like to come and meet us but he thinks he'd blow our minds." Remember those lyrics from one of David Bowie's first hits? Well, whether that was the initial source of inspiration or not for John Carpenter's *Starman*, he does just that on both counts.

Starman cuts through the disappointing mega-buck productions of late to emerge as the outright winner, in my humble estimation. Yes, it is illogical, safe and predictable, but it is also emotionally uplifting and has a sense of warmth about it which is a welcome addition to the Carpenter canon. This is the film Columbia pictures passed on *E.T.* to make instead, and there are admittedly some similarities. But Carpenter's sure hand guides *Starman* towards its own identity and vision. It really is the best piece of Carpenter to be had for a while after the coldness of *The Thing* and the calculating commercial viability of *Christine*.

Starman is nothing more than girl meets alien, girl falls for alien, girl loses alien. An extra-terrestrial comes to observe life on earth and crash-lands near the Wisconsin home of recently widowed Jenny Hayden (Karen Allen). When the alien takes on the identity of her deceased husband, played by Jeff Bridges, she finds herself kidnapped and coerced into making sure he meets an appointment with his Mothership at Meteor Crater National Park. Jenny Hayden is, of course, terrified, but through having to teach him the rudiments of human behaviour and learning about his life-giving properties, she gradually begins to care for the other-worldly being. With governmental officials in hot pursuit, she makes the biggest sacrifice of all when it seems he will not make his life or death reconnaissance.

After a powerhouse initial 20 mi-



Above: "At the sound of the first tone please leave your message." Karen Allen at the very human center of John Carpenter's tale of extra-terrestrial love - *Starman*.

routes, *Starman* settles down to a leisurely pace in order to make telling statements about our earthly existence. Carpenter directs these sequences with a sly humour that doesn't come across as lecturing but as dry comment on the human condition and about our future in the cosmic scheme of things. It's back to the lyrics of the Bowie song again - "He told us not to blow it 'cause he knows it's all worthwhile."

Only those who find Jeff Bridges' Oscar nominated performance irritating in the extreme will fail to melt under Carpenter's gentle pressure. Bridges' clipped, mannered pronunciation and awkward gestures do take a while to get used to but are a triumph in conclusion. And his actions are perfectly showcased by Karen Allen's wonderful and very moving performance. It might be worth remembering that it is other actors who vote for the Oscar nominees which only goes to prove how difficult an artifice Bridges' character was to pull off in their estimation.

ILM's special effects range in quality from the crystal clear, luminescent interplanetary opening to the muggy

climatic appearance of the Mothership. The latter seems to owe a lot to the low budget *Wavelength*, if that seems at all possible. And while on the subject, it seems a shame that we never witness the Mothership taking off which greatly detracts from the full emotional impact the finale could have had. Otherwise, it's the fascinating actions of the iridescent blue ball-bearings - the key to the alien's miraculous power - that hold the interest. Another special effect that certainly doesn't seem like one is the speeding train hurtling through the Las Vegas landscape. Watch out for it and you'll appreciate its subtlety. The only minor carp to be had in this area incredibly falls at the feet of the talented triumvirate of make-up artists Dick Smith, Rick Baker and Stan Winston. Their collective contribution involves the transformation from alien to human and it is a big disappointment. It's hard to believe that Smith used in excess of 140 different head sculptures to achieve such lack-lustre and minimal effect. As for Rick Baker's rubber baby - the first stage of this embryonic sleight of hand - I wonder why they didn't just use a real one and be done with

it. Instances like this only go to show how we can be blinded by the over-use of special effects. The extremes, and expense, some productions go to instead of opting for the simplest and most obvious solution sometimes just aren't worth all the trouble and this small scene in *Starman* proves it.

But special effects aren't what *Starman* is ultimately about. Humanity is, and I'm all for that in these days of the increasing reliance on hardware in films. Carpenter injects a hereto unforeseen maturity into what is basically a simple life-enhancing love story. As spurious as some may find this evaluation of an admittedly lightweight film, in broad terms, *Starman* gives us hope for the future. Not just mankind's either, but John Carpenter's as well.

Alan Jones

Starring: Jeff Bridges (*Starman*), Karen Allen (*Jenny Hayden*), Charles Martin Smith (*Mark Sherman*), Richard J. Aaron (*George Fox*), Robert Phalen (*Mayor Bell*). Directed by John Carpenter. Produced by Larry J. Francis. Screenplay by Bruce A. Evans and Raymond Gideon.

BABY

"Fascinating for all the wrong reasons"

"Hey there, Brontosaur! Have you got a lesson for us?" With those immortal words from the theme song of *Baby* resonating in my frontal lobes, I staggered out of the screening room and into the welcome embrace of a large whisky. *Baby* is one of those movies that is fascinating for all the wrong reasons. For example, I was more interested in wondering what was going through the minds of the actors and film crew when they were making *Baby* than what I was watching on the screen. Take the scene where the beautiful Sean Young and William Katt, who plays her husband, are indulging in a bit of steamy foreplay beside a jungle lake; what, I wondered, had Ms. Young been thinking about during the shooting of that scene. There she was, disrobing seductively in front of Mr. Katz, and the film crew, while some poor sod bent double in a plastic dinosaur suit kept butting her with the creature's head...

Was she wondering what the hell she was doing there? Was she thinking that maybe acting had been a wrong career choice after all and she should have stayed at the Sloan-

Kettering Institute for Cancer Research (where she once worked as a research assistant)? Was she thinking of shooting her agent? Patrick McGeehan, who plays a villainous paleontologist, certainly looked as if he wanted to shoot his agent as well as a lot of other people besides...

Baby is another movie from the Touchstone part of the Disney empire — the same people who brought you *Splash*. Unfortunately, despite its various attractions, *Baby* is no *Splash*, lacking the mermaid movie's wit, charm and originality. *Baby* is basically a modern reworking of all those 'lost world/monster-on-the-loose' movies from yesteryear, from *King Kong* to *The Valley of Gwangi*. The film it most resembles as far as plot is concerned is *Gorgo*, which also featured a baby dinosaur that is finally rescued from evil humans by its big mother (and both films end with an identical shot of mother and baby swimming away side by side). Of course, in *Gorgo* the whole city of London gets trampled on by big Momma, while in *Baby* it's only a small African town that suffers the same fate.

Baby stands or falls on whether or not you find the dinosaurs convincing and I'm afraid I didn't. The big dinosaurs are okay — they seem to move more realistically than 'baby' and have leathery-looking hides, but 'baby', with its smooth, plastic-like skin, just looks like what it is — a man, or woman, in a dinosaur costume. At times it had as much reality as a



Top: Susan and George Loomis, attempt to free Baby's mother. Above: The couple at the mercy of Dr Eric Kivatt's (Patrick McGeehan) private army. Left: The not-so-good doctor himself looks on.



pantomime horse, which made it all the harder for me to keep a straight face while the actors did their best to pretend they were dealing with the real thing. I had the strong suspicion that everytime the director yelled 'Cut!' everyone, cast and crew, fell to the ground and rolled about helplessly with laughter.

The dinosaur effects were supervised by Isidoro Raponi, a former partner of Carlo Rambaldi, and it shows: 'baby' does a lot of that cute eye-rolling in the manner of Rambaldi's ET creation. Like Rambaldi, Raponi obviously has an atavistic dislike for stop-motion photography à la Harryhausen. Instead all the dinosaur shots were done for 'real'; that is, with either people in suits or full-scale models. The latter, I hasten to add, weren't capable of walking around but were used in the scenes where the adult dinosaurs weren't required to do any moving, apart from lifting their heads or twitching their tails. The various facial expressions were controlled by off-camera

operators via cables in the same way that ET's were.

Personally I think that a mixture of stop-motion photography, utilising the 'go-motion' techniques developed by ILM, and full-scale sections (for close-ups of the heads, etc) would have given better results. The ILM technicians proved with *Dragonslayer* that such a mixture could be very effective, their animated dragon in that movie certainly looked more alive than any of Raponi's dinosaurs (the dinosaurs don't even appear to breathe, which adds to their unreality).

There's a limit to what can be achieved with the Rambaldi/Raponi approach to special effects, and I'm afraid *Baby* exposes those limits all too plainly.

John Brosnan

Starring: William Katt (George Loomis), Sean Young (Susan Matthews-Loomis), Patrick McGeehan (Dr. Eric Kivatt). Directed by B.W.L. Norton. Produced by Jonathan T. Teplitz. Screenplay by Clifford & Ellen Green.

THE NEVER ENDING STORY

"A never ending
fiasco"

On a juvenile level, *The Neverending Story* is a far better bet for children than the recent dire TV movie *Caravan of Courage*. But for admirers of Michael Ende's latterday "Alice in Wonderland"—or anyone with half a brain for that matter—it's a never ending fiasco. Director Wolfgang Petersen may have proved in the past how good he was at realism in the New German cinema, look no further than *The Boat* or *The Consequence* for examples, but why he was chosen for a project which needed an uninhibited sense of imagination is a never ending source of amazement. Because that is precisely the main problem at the heart of *The Neverending Story*—a complete lack of wonder. It fails to elevate or involve and remains depressingly earthbound. Set in a papier-mâché mythical world called Fantasia, *The Neverending Story* confounds at every turn with its scrappy special effects, boring production design and hastily re-edited scenes from the much longer German original. Any positive statement about the value of reading and of giving free rein to one's imagination in order to survive our everyday existence is over-simplified and trivialized to a distracting degree. Easy to understand why then Michael Ende has disowned the film and withdrawn his name from the credits.

Hiding from the class bullies, 10 year-old Bastian (Barret Oliver) finds himself in a weird bookshop. His attention is caught by a strange old book called "The Neverending Story" and, as if possessed, he steals it, skips a maths test and begins to read it in the school's attic. Immediately he is propelled into the incredible land of Fantasia (changed for some reason from the book's *Fantastica*), where its myriad of strange characters are being menaced by an advancing ill devouring void called The Nothing. At the Ivory Tower, delegates from the kingdom have congregated to beg the help of the Empress. But she is deathly ill, so the fate of this magical nation is put in the hands of a boy warrior named Atreyu (Battlstar Galetica's Noah Hathaway), who embarks on a



Top: Leapin' Leprechauns! Sydney Bromley as Engywook with Patricia Hayes as Urgl. Middle: A boy and his dragon. Bottom: Snail power in the magical land of Fantasia.

perilous quest to find a cure for the Empress' illness and therefore save the land.

The literary device in Ende's romance is given short shrift here allowing as it does for Bastian to enter the story and save Fantasia

exclusively by simply giving the Empress a new name. This refuses to work in the movie for a number of reasons, the main one being that Bastian's character was integrated within the story in a more concrete way in the book using red print for

Bastian's story and green for Fantasia's. All we get in the film is visual cut backs to reaction shots, whereas in the novel Bastian shares Atreyu's odyssey and learns from it, gaining self-confidence and initiative. This is at the heart of Ende's book, not just a simple revenge motive for brouncing the classroom bullies! Ample opportunity is given in the film to explore this avenue, Atreyu looking into the Mirror Gate and seeing Bastian's reflection, but it is just thrown away as are so many ingredients from the book.

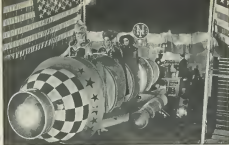
The menagerie populace of Fantasia also steadfastly refuse to work under the supervision of special effects man Brian Johnson. Unconvincing composite shots fight the creatures own unconvincing movements. Anything learnt from Jim Henson's operation goes for naught here—the audio-animatronic models focus on their cleverness rather than the creation of believable characters. The Luckdragon is so fake it's off-putting, and the other creatures like the racing snail and the Rock Bitar all look like characters dreamed up by advertising agencies.

The best effect in the entire movie is The Nothing! This quaking entity, which scrapes vegetation off the ground, does elicit some sort of positive reaction, something that is sadly lacking in all other areas... unless you discount the desperate attempts to make downtown Munich look like middle America!

The Neverending Story is an outrageous condensing of Ende's themes and, if not groundbreaking ideas, novel allegories. This movie version is a pale, watered down version of only half of Ende's book. No actor stands out, and the magic that worked on the printed page is played with in too fast and loose a fashion by people who should have known better. There is no sense of danger at all in Atreyu's quest, all we are presented with is a 94 minute episodic pulp adaptation. *The Neverending Story* never really starts. Ende's book categorically states that if inhabitants of Fantasia cross into the real world they turn into lies. This totally contradicts the end of this movie and is as telling a statement about the whole sorry mess as anyone could wish to come up with.

Alan Jones

Starring: Noah Hathaway (Atreyu), Barret Oliver (Bastian), Tami Stronach (The Empress), Moses Gunn (Cavort), Patricia Hayes (Urgl), Sydney Bromley (Engywook), Gerald McRaney (Bastian's Father). Directed by Wolfgang Petersen. Produced by Bernd Eichinger and Dieter Geissler. Screenplay by Wolfgang Petersen and Herman Weigel.



MORONS FROM OUTER SPACE

*"Moronic isn't the
word"*

And the winner of this year's Bloodbath at the House of Death award for unfunniest comedy goes to Mel Smith and Griff Rhys Jones' lamentable *Morons From Outer Space*.

It's a constant source of amazement why so many television comedians think they can get away with cinematically stretching pathetically thin sketches and call it entertainment. Ales Smith and Jones try, as have so many before them, in this shambling spoof lampooning 2001, Close Encounters and Star Wars etc. And the end result wouldn't have even made the grade during the Oxbridge duo's last term student rag week. Apart from anything else,

aren't the targets a trifle dated?

This excuse for a motion picture tells of four very ordinary aliens, space wellies even, from the planet Blob whose spaceship crash lands on Earth and how one of them ends up in a mental institution and the others form a glam-rock band.

One expected better things from all concerned, especially director Mike Hodges who shamefully slums it here after *The Terminal Man* and *Flash Gordon*.

If sneezing in an astronaut suit, mistaking a dustbin for an earthling and a spaceship trailing a caravan sound funny, then obviously *Morons From Outer Space* is for you.

But in all honesty, moronic isn't the word to properly describe this miserable failure.

Alan Jones

Starring: Mel Smith (Bernard), Griff Rhys Jones (Graham Sweetley), James B. Sisking (Colonel Lambie), Dinsdale Larden (Commander Mortimer), Jimmy Nail (Commander Brock), Joanne Pearce (Sandra Brock), Paul Bown (Arden Tope). Directed by Mike Hodges. Produced by Barry Hanson. Screenplay by Griff Rhys Jones and Mel Smith.



Top left: The glam rock survivors are grounded. Top above: The motley morons assemble. Above: "Sniff, sniff! I wonder if the air is any batty outside", Mel Smith jokes.

C.H.U.D.

*"Neither gory nor
exciting enough"*

Although it's certainly nowhere near the Deathline class, *C.H.U.D.* isn't exactly C.R.U.D.

Due to the SoHo area of Manhattan's sewers and subways being used as a government toxic waste dump, various tramps and derelicts have mutated into the Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dwellers of the title. It takes a fashion photographer, the head of a soup kitchen and a police captain whose wife has fallen prey to John Caglione Jr.'s made-up zombies — complete with silly light bulb eyes — to get to the bottom of this top level cover-up. This motley crew also provide the minimal thrills to be had under the manholes of New York.

Neither gory nor exciting enough to

warrant too much interest, *C.H.U.D.* routinely C.H.U.G.s along to an inevitable twist end, rendered more insulting by being so obviously a scene re-edited from the middle of the original cut of the movie. (The version on show here is New World's edited down U.S. print).

Hed *C.H.U.D.* been invested with a campy vein of humour in the style of *Alligator* it would have been far easier to take. And had it highlighted the polluted monsters — only resily glimpsed at here — instead of the generally unlikable characters we are asked to empathise with, it would have been a more honest film rather than such an indifferent one.

Incredibly producer Andrew Bonime tried to get *C.H.U.D.* off the ground for four years. In the final analysis, he needn't have bothered!

Alan Jones

Starring: John Heard (George Capper), Christopher Curry (Boach), Daniel Stern (The Reverend). Directed by Douglas Cheek. Screenplay by Farrell Hall.



Above: A Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dweller strikes!

A strange mixture of science fiction, comedy and action-packed adventure, *Buckaroo Banzai* is a bizarre excursion into the fantastic. Director W.D. Richter talks here about the making of the movie that challenges reality!

Interview by James Burns

"Don't short-sell your own world," advises W.D. Richter, the Director/Producer of *Buckaroo Banzai*. "Moviegoers don't have to flee from reality in order to be entertained. Our film speculates that there are things right around us that are as weird and exciting as anything you might find in another galaxy."

Buckaroo Banzai, created and written by Earl Mac Rauch, promises to be one of the strangest amalgams of science fiction and heroic adventure ever attempted. To enable audiences to be drawn into the saga, Richter figured that they'd have to believe that its events, despite their oddness, could actually happen (a key to the dramatic success of any kind of fantasy endeavour). As a result, the director surmised that *Buckaroo Banzai*'s production design would be crucial. To help lend the film credence, Richter wanted *Buckaroo Banzai*'s milieu to be as realistic as its wild plot would allow.

"Since the real world appears ramshackle — because people constantly repair whatever's around them — the film has a purposely unpolished look," Richter says. "That reaffirms the idea behind *Buckaroo*'s character: he's a man who puts things together from odd places, using all the different disciplines that he's dabbling in. The Jet Car, for example, looks like it was built by someone with a good idea, rather than a million dollars: you can see its welds and paint chips. *Buckaroo*'s approach is simple: Take a tool meant for his Jet Car, and figure out a way to use it in neuro-surgery."

"Lizardo and his colleagues have also reshaped their portion of our world," continues Richter, "but while trying to remain inconspicuous. What the aliens think wouldn't be noticeable to 'regular Earthlings', however, is some of the bizarre stuff imaginable. We tried to infuse the Lectoroids' scenes with a sense of culture, to forge a mythical civilisation."

Aiding Richter's fabrication of *Buckaroo Banzai* was Production Designer Michael Riva, whose previous experience included *Bad Boys*, *Brubaker* and *Ordinary People*. "To achieve an environment that would not only appear

BUCKAROO BANZAI



The villains of Buckaroo Banzai: The crazed Lord John Whorlin (John Lithgow, centre) with John O'Connor and John Biggs.

fantastic, but have a basis in reality," Richter comments. "Mike did a lot of research in medicine, physics, electromagnetism, mathematics. ... He really enjoyed remaking a messy world. Mike has a great dramatic sense, and incredible powers of observation, which — in addition to wonderfully realising the script — actually inspired Earl Mac Rauch to devise even more unusual concepts."

Further adherence to Richter's overall scheme included shooting 90 percent of the film on location, in such seemingly unlikely places as a gutted Firestone Tyre and Rubber factory, Armco Steel, warehouses, and an operating facility of the Department of Water and Power. "I needed something on film that would be startlingly different," Richter says. "The locations were terrific: basements dripping with

grease, huge chambers with generators in them, strange pipes hanging down from the ceilings. ... Another advantage to shooting on location was that since we had a relatively small budget for this kind of film (roughly \$12 million), we were enabled to make a little look like a lot. I hope that *Buckaroo Banzai*'s audience will know that they aren't merely watching sets. It could make them think, 'Wow, this story could really be happening someplace.'"

Most of *Buckaroo Banzai*'s shooting plans were hatched during a three-month pre-production phase. Joining Michael Riva on Richter's staff were such other behind-the-scenes luminaries as Visual Effects Supervisor Michael Fink (*WarGames*, *One From the Heart*), Cinematographer Fred Koenekamp (an Academy Award-winner for *The*

Towering Inferno), Costume Designer Agnes Rodgers (Return of the Jedi, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest), and Set Decorator for Blade Runner and Star Trek – The Motion Picture). Buckaroo Banzai also boasts the contributions of three men previously familiar to fantasy fans: make-up whiz Tom Burman (Cat People, Invasion of the Body Snatchers), miniature-model masters Greg Jein (V, 1941, Close Encounters) and Mark Stetson (Ghostbusters, Star Trek – The Motion Picture).

"Virtually every aspect of Buckaroo Banzai was open to influence from whomever on the movie had a good idea," Richter reveals. "Delegating authority – always a secret to good directing – was especially important on this picture, because we only had 12 weeks in which to shoot it. I had to trust the technical people to do their work properly, because once on the set, all I had time for was handling the film's performances and action. Anything else on my part – like making sure that a light was twice as bright for some obscure reason – would have been self-indulgent."

"I originally thought of the crew we hired," Richter details, "by consulting lists I'd made through the past of several people whom I'd one day like to work with. They, in turn, put me on to other talented production personnel. The final group – or 'Team Banzai' as we called ourselves – did a great job, and were incredibly happy not to be suffering through the average movie experience. There was a marvellous conspiracy to make something truly unusual."

Prior to Buckaroo Banzai, Richter had served in the film industry for over a decade, as a screenwriter. His involvement with this project, however, can be traced back to before he was even interested in a movie career.

During the late sixties, Richter gained a degree in literature from Dartmouth College, and upon graduation travelled across the country with his wife Susan to attend the University of Southern California's film school. Soon after completing USC's courses, Richter began getting work, including in 1973, *Silther* (his first original screenplay to see production). A year later, Richter and his wife read a review of *Dirty Pictures From the Prom*, a debut novel by another Dartmouth graduate in their alumni association's newsletter. Richter bought the book, liked it, and decided to send its creator a fan letter.

Dirty Pictures From the Prom's author was Earl Mac Rauch.

Richter recalls, "I wrote, 'I think you're a terrific writer. If you're not happy doing what you're doing, maybe you'd like to come to Hollywood and try movies, because there really aren't that many good writers out here.' It turned out that, after Dartmouth, Mac had dropped out of law school, and was

selling finance contracts for mobile homes in Texas. He took me up on my offer."

At one of Rauch's first dinners with the Richters, "He told us about Buckaroo Banzai. Even though Mac's plot and characters were just in a beginning, sketchy phase, Susan and I were immediately attracted to Buckaroo's irreverence, and the concept of a multi-talented hero who's always off on an unlikely adventure. We decided to subsidise a Buckaroo Banzai screenplay. I didn't know if I would direct it back then, though. I wasn't sure of what the project's future would be anyway. As strange as Buckaroo Banzai may seem today, ten years ago it would have been impossible to explain to a studio how it could be successfully shot and marketed. I realised that funding Mac

Buckaroo, for instance, wasn't always half-Japanese. "Mac just thought that the film was too outrageous to ever be sold," Richter explains. "He never showed those partial scripts to a studio, and let his inspirations carry him wherever they led. And, though Mac is a brilliant writer, he's also a bit unorganised. If I hadn't kept copies of his various Buckaroo storylines, they'd have been lost."

Despite Rauch's occasional carelessness ("He once sold a car with his only copy of an original screenplay under the seat," the director notes), Richter's gambit eventually panned out. After a short while in Los Angeles, Rauch started receiving screen assignments regularly, including Martin Scorsese's *New York, New York* and, more recently, *A Stranger is Watching*.



Peter Weller as the intrepid hero in *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across The 8th Dimension*.

might just be an exercise in buying a very expensive story that I wanted to read, but my other, perhaps even more important impetus, was that I wanted to help him get started in the movie business."

Consequently, with the Richters' input, Rauch wrote several Buckaroo Banzai adventures. "Mac would get thirty or forty pages into a script, abandon its storyline, and start a new one," Richter says. "The plots involved several different nemeses from our present film, including the infamous Hanoi Xan, Boss of the World Crime League... Many of the characters, like Perfect Tommy and Rawhide, weren't created until later drafts. Members of the Hong Kong Cavaliers that Mac did include, as well as other roles, were eliminated or developed differently.

Richter was also kept busy, penning such movies as Phillip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* remake, *Dracula* (the Frank Langella version), and *Brubaker* (and Oscar nomination). By 1980, his credits were strong enough to prompt Hollywood to give him a chance to direct. So that he wouldn't "solely be a director for hire" and could cultivate his own projects, Richter formed a production company, with Neil Canton (a former assistant to Peter Bogdanovich and Walter Hill).

The first film the duo elected to pursue was *Buckaroo Banzai*. They asked Rauch to write a treatment – a synopsis of a screenplay – since he still hadn't thoroughly concluded a Buckaroo adventure. The premise would then be used by Canton and Richter to "shop the project around," in hopes of

securing backing. "The synopsis Mac came up with," Richter discloses, "wasn't selected from the scripts he had already written. Lizardo and the other aliens appeared as Mac wrote the treatment. At that stage, the Lictroids were barely described, referred to only as something like 'red ants'. A treatment is often shaped merely as a film's barest kind of launching point. In fact, Mac's original title for the story was *Lepers From Saturn*..."

When Rauch finished the treatment, Canton approached veteran producer Sidney Beckerman, for whom he had once worked as a Vice-President of Production. Beckerman (who would become Buckaroo's Executive Producer), offered to arrange a meeting for Canton and Richter with David Begelman, then head of MGM. The studio ultimately agreed to finance the picture's "development" — namely, the creation of a screenplay. Although the script would have to be based on the treatment, Rauch's earlier ideas eventually proved to be equally invaluable. "Much of the film's detailed character histories emanate from those other, unfinished screenplays," Richter relates. "I mean, at one point, the story of how Buckaroo met and married Peggy Priddy, who was then murdered by Hanoi Xan, was the framework for the entire movie. Almost all of Mac's initial drafts were drawn on, giving us a wonderful web of background material." Shortly after Begelman gave Buckaroo the go-ahead, he left MGM, and the studio subsequently dropped it from their roster. The project remained in limbo, until Begelman again bought it, this time as head of Sherwood Productions, and independent firm. When Sherwood enlisted Twentieth Century Fox to distribute the film, Richter was given a firm start date — after over eight years of preparation — for the shooting of *Buckaroo Banzai*.

Once production commenced, Richter had to ensure that his directorial style would adequately translate Rauch's carefully crafted tale to celluloid. One element of *Buckaroo Banzai* that threatened to take the edge off the film's excitement was its aforementioned humour. If audiences perceived the movie as a comedy, it would be difficult for them to take *Buckaroo*'s "dangerous situations" seriously, thereby eliminating much of the picture's suspense potential. "I think that *Buckaroo* is an adventure laced with humour," Richter opines. "At the same time, though, there's probably never a moment in the picture totally without some whimsical slant. We wanted to have humour in the film, but never allow the laughs to get silly. Once an adventure film reaches the point where it's consistently winking at the audience, it usually becomes ludicrous. To help prevent that, we went with actors

who instinctively played their roles straight. That way, whatever humour was inherent in the material would be brought out naturally, enhancing the film's thrills."

Featured in the lineup Richter chose are John Lithgow (*Terms of Endearment*, 2010) as Dr Lizardo; Christopher Lloyd (*Star Trek III*, *Taxi*) as John Bigboot; Jeff Goldblum (*The Right Stuff*, *The Big Chill*) as New Jersey; Ellen Barkin (*Tender Mercies*, *Diner*) as Penny Priddy; Jamie Lee Curtis (*Trading Places*, *Halloween*) in a cameo as Buckaroo's mother; and a group of lesser known performers whom, Richter says, "are extremely talented. You haven't heard the last of them."

The picture's toughest role to cast, naturally, was that of its title character. "We needed an actor," says Richter, "who could both look heroic with



Boozey Floosie Penny Priddy (Ellen Barkin), Buckaroo's girl.

grease all over his face, and project the kind of intelligence you would associate with a neurosurgeon and inventor. He also had to be able to physically, as well as mentally, act his way through a role. We looked for a Buckaroo in New York, since I figured that an actor with experience on stage or from small films would be able to completely interact with props." After Richter screened numerous candidates for the part, he finally selected Peter Weller. Weller's origins as a "serious" theatre performer (the New York Shakespeare Festival's Tony Award-winning *Sticks and Bones*, *Streamers*) and his work in such films as *Shoot the Moon* and *Just Tell Me What You Want*, added up to exactly what the director had been searching for.

"Peter, and the rest of the cast, had a difficult job in that, to a certain extent, they were playing archetypes," Richter states. "Like the production people, they went beyond genre conventions and created something truly unique and engaging. With Peter, there was

the bonus that he already knew how to twirl a sixgun (he had been a fast-draw artist in high school), manipulate a sword, play musical instruments, and sing. It would have been foolish for me to expect that the actor playing Buckaroo to have those aptitudes, but it was great that we didn't have to fake them."

Despite the picture's quixotic tone, Richter claims that its fight sequences aren't stylised. "Buckaroo actually fights the way you or I would. If suddenly jumped by three guys, he simply does his best to get out alive. Buckaroo may not be a karate champ, but he gets the job done."

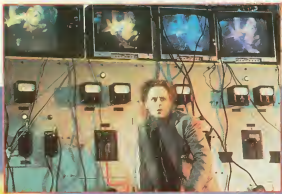
Action, of course, is only one component of *Buckaroo Banzai*. Clearly, the picture is a virtual cornucopia of themes that, Richter feels, film-fans will find fascinating. That diversity, however, could work against the film as a whole, making *Buckaroo Banzai* emerge as an indecipherable hodge-podge.

"We tried to avoid a general lack of clarity by zeroing in on story logic," Richter says. "Yet, a certain amount of disorder could benefit the picture, by further fleshing out its sense of weirdness. After all, *Buckaroo Banzai* is a movie about confusion. 'How can Buckaroo possibly sort out all of the problems being thrown at him?' The real danger is that the character's confusion could pour over to the audience. Unless they stay up to speed with the movie, viewers could really get lost: not because the story doesn't make sense, but because they haven't been able to assimilate it. For better or for worse, *Buckaroo Banzai* really comes at you full steam."

It was *Buckaroo Banzai*'s complexity that originally made Hollywood hesitant to back it. Richter readily admits that one of Fox's motivations in distributing *Buckaroo Banzai* is the possibility it provides to duplicate a *Star Wars*-type phenomenon.

Richter confides that he wouldn't be adverse to making another *Buckaroo Banzai* movie, and perhaps even more than one, as long as the conditions surrounding its production were the same as on the present film: essentially, "the co-operation and enthusiasm of everyone" involved. He also points out, however, that "nobody would be interested" in additional *Buckaroo* films, unless the first is popular.

Richter pauses a moment, before concluding, "All of this talk about sequels and money is getting ahead of ourselves. I didn't get into films to become a millionaire. I started writing, and now directing, because I like movies. We tried to make a picture that would be entertaining and thought provoking. If we've succeeded in giving audiences a good time for a couple of hours, that's reward enough in itself."



Top left: The manic Lord John Whorfin (known to the world as Dr. Emílio Lizardo) is about to throw the switch! Top right: An alien being. Above: The fabulous high-speed Jat Car (equipped with Oscillation Over-thruster) rips through the sound barrier. Left: The sharp-dressed Hong Kong Cavaliers.

DREAM CHILD



The attempts to cinematically realise Lewis Carroll's *Alice* tales have met with varying success, but the lure to bring them to the screen continues. *Alan Jones* reports on a new British film, directed by Gavin Millar and featuring the handiwork of Jim Henson's Creature Shop, which peers a little deeper into the mirror and Alice's adventures in Wonderland.

On the 4th of July, 1862, an event of literary importance took place. A ten year-old girl asked a reserved Oxford don to commit to paper some of the stories with which he had entranced her throughout that summer. Her name was Alice Liddell and his, Charles Dodgson – or to use his adopted pseudonym, Lewis Carroll. The book of course was *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Now this uneasily platonic, Freudian relationship comes to the screen as part of Dennis Potter's script for a new £2.9 million movie backed by Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment. Entitled *Dream*

Child, it centres on the trip Alice Liddell made to New York aboard the SS Berengaria at the age of 80 to take part in the Dodgson centenary celebrations. And it is while she is at sea that her insecurities, neuroses and fear of dying manifest themselves in dreams and nightmares featuring the strange creatures the fictional Alice met during her fantasy misadventures.

● *The fantasy in Dream Child really isn't of the flashy George Lucas variety, but more evocative of the shifting memories that take place in an old woman's mind. It really will be a film that will be accessible on every level...*

● *Rick McCullum, Producer.*

● Produced by Rick McCullum and Kenneth Trodd, *Dream Child* is directed

by Gavin Millar and stars Coral Brown, Ian Holm, Jane Asher and Peter Gallagher. The ten or so minutes of pure fantasy involving the Griffin, the Mock Turtle, the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, the Dormouse and the Caterpillar were the responsibility of Jim Henson's Creature Shop, under the auspices of Lyle Conway. According to everyone involved in the production, Potter's screenplay is superb. And that is the reason why the usually reticent Henson Organisation decided to do the film for the budget equivalent of the cost of just one of the characters they supplied for Disney's upcoming *OZ* – the antique robot Tik Tok.

● Producer Rick McCullum was a late-comer to Potter and Trodd's *Pennies From Heaven*, and he joined them after a four and a half year stint with John Frankenheimer when he realised they

all shared the same ideals. However, these ideals for quality films from the Potter stable doesn't mean that *Dream Child* will be pretentious. "Far from it", says McCullum, "pretentious is the least word for it. The fantasy in *Dream Child* isn't really of the flashy George Lucas variety, but more evocative of the shifting memories that take place in an old woman's mind. It really will be a film that's accessible on every level, and the most exciting part of it for me is that it has opened the doors for Potter and Henson to get on and really do something fabulous together".

● Henson's organisation was in his mind from the very start, says McCullum. He continues, "It was crucial that the creatures were live action and not animated in any way. We were all very aware that Jim had never involved himself in anybody else's film apart



from Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*, and that was for a whole set of other different reasons. But it turned out he was a great admirer of Potter's work and I think it has been a valuable learning experience for them as they've never worked under such pressure from such a tight budget. I really don't know how we would have achieved anything like the reality, the *frank* reality, without their help".

● *This is imaginative fiction in the truest sense. I hope the film won't offend any Lewis Carroll purists, but then I'm not making this film for them.*

● *Gavin Millar, Director.*

● McCullum is still surprised at the speed with which EMI gave them the go-ahead to make *Dream Child*. He ➔



"Welcome to my nightmare". The Caterpillar introduces himself to Alice.

recalls, "We wanted to be in control of *Dream Child*, and we were all willing to give up a large part of our salaries for that end. If we had made it in America, it would have cost six times as much and Brooke Shields would have to have been the star. That sacrifice would have been too great. Look what happened to *Pennies from Heaven*! On that I watched a director not being able to deal with the quality of the material but at the same time being fascinated by it and wanting to be over reverent. Luckily we submitted *Dream Child* to EMI's Verity Lambert, who, to her credit, wants to make British films with British talent, and wasn't at all phased by our choice of Director as the Americans were. EMI will never lose on this picture because of the budget".

We've never worked under such a tight budget, . . . (or) under such pressure. We worked it out as one-fourth of the work load on The Dark Crystal, at ten times the speed . . . It was a killer just to start and finish on time.

Lyle Conway, Animatronics Designer.

Because of a debilitating illness that Dennis Potter has had for 15 years, it was up to McCallum to ensure the crux of his script remained intact. And that, according to McCallum, was the type of love that Dodgson had for the pre-pubescent Alice, he continues, "It is so easy - post-Freud - for our society to analyse what his love for Alice probably was. Child molestation is what first comes to mind, but the force of *Dream*

Child is to dispel that notion and outline the reasons why he would never have touched her in a million years. He was incapable of describing how pure his love was because he didn't have the language".

BETWEEN THE REAL AND FANTASTIC

Gavin Millar was the *Pennies From Heaven* sole choice of Director, mainly because Potter thought his version of the television play *Cream in my Coffee* was the best realisation of his work. His other credits have included the tele-film *Secrets* for David Puttnam's *First Love* series for Channel 4. Millar loved the script as much as everybody else, as he explains. "It was original and unusual,

and I could see the potential as it was an interesting mixture of the real and fantastic and the whole spectrum in between, not just talking heads. It was nice to have a goat the hard fast-talking American made from familiar patterns of 1930s movies too". The first choice of actress to play Alice was Peggy Ashcroft, but when filming of *A Passage to India* went over schedule, Coral Brown was cast. "Peggy and I had worked so well before on *Cream in my Coffee*", explains Millar, "and Dennis had her in mind when he was writing the script for *Dream Child*. Coral knows this but also knows that we fell on her with glee and delight when Peggy became unavailable. Everyone brings different qualities to a role and, although Coral hasn't done much film work, she instinctively knew what I wanted, as there are character elements very appropriate to her persona".

One aspect of *Dream Child* was very clear to Millar. He had definite ideas on how he wanted the fantasy characters conceptualised. "We decided at a very early stage which creatures we should make", he says, "mainly because of Henson's time scale. We were all anxious to get away from any cuteness of Disney-like approach. The creatures were never meant to be endearing, but as realistic as possible so their emotions would seem as violent as any human ones. The creatures stand for all sorts of tangible things—death, loneliness, worries and regret. They tap all levels of the mind on an emotive plane". Millar cites these examples, "With the Griffin we wanted to intimate that he could swoop down off his rock and peck out Alice's eyes, or worse still bite her head off. The Mad Hatter could well throw a sharp broken plate at her too. And the March Hare represents nature incarnate as his teeth are very feral and he is covered with flecks of blood around his neck and mouth. These creatures are not just a product of an old woman's imagination but true to the feral laws of nature as well". Millar sees *Dream Child* as "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" in front page story only—a book on which the film can hand itself. As he says, "This is imaginative fiction in the truest sense. I hope the film won't offend any Lewis Carroll purists, but then I'm not making this film for them".

For animatronics expert Lyle Conway, *Dream Child* was the first project under the Creature Workshop banner, an idea that had first arisen during the filming of *The Dark Crystal*. He explains, "Back then I tried to get Jim Henson to keep people on specifically to do freelance work. It didn't seem quite so practical back then, but after *OZ* he asked me to organise such an operation. Most of the *OZ* personnel have been responsible for *Dream Child*".



Above: Ian Holm as dream-weaver Lewis Carroll, consoles the young Alice in a scene from *Dream Child*.

Like everybody involved in this prestigious production—one destined as Britain's entry for the Cannes Film Festival—Conway pinned his faith on the Potter screenplay. He continues, "I hate reading scripts but I read this in an evening and I immediately wanted to be involved, as it is far more adult than anything else we've tackled. As a result we all put in that bit extra and that's what got the film done on time and on budget". As one person of two who worked on the film for the first month and a half, Conway feels his input on *Dream Child* exceeds any prior project. "I liked the way I could sculpt everything", he says, "which is something I don't normally do, although strictly speaking the turtle shell, the flippers and the Dormouse were done by somebody else, but it was nice to have that sort of control. I also liked the way everything moved so fast. We had 14 weeks to build the lot which is no time at all for us, and I think we stayed that much fresher as a result. I sculpted four heads in three days early on to get the process on the way because I really wanted to get the mechanical people from *OZ* involved".

A THREATENING SUBTEXT

Potter's brief to Conway about how the creatures should look was quite simple. He wanted them to be as familiar as possible but far more decadent than people would remember. Millar wanted Conway to invest the creatures with more ferocity than shown in John

Tenniel's original book illustrations. "For example," explains Conway, "The Griffin is a man's body with the legs of a lion and virtually no fur. This we figured would be more sexually threatening. We also did a lot of hare research too which is how we can explain the scars and blood on the March Hare's neck. It would be his mating season and therefore part of his madness. We also went into detail about the Hatter trade and found that mercury poisoning was one of the career hazards. So the Mad Hatter's madness evolves from these symptoms—one being what is known as the Hatter's Skake, which is why he keeps spilling his tea all the time. This subtext really helped us understand the characters more and the film is a lot better for it".

Despite this facet though, Conway isn't sure if the Creature Workshop made major advances on the animatronic state of the art. "Different approaches were taken, surely. We had to solve movement problems. Like *OZ*, *Dream Child* had reasonably well delineated characters to begin with, so we had to take them as they were and interpret them to make them function. In *The Dark Crystal*, the creatures were planned around the restrictions of puppetry. The Mad Hatter was probably the most difficult to accomplish because the puppet, or rather man in suit with a mechanised head, was most like a real person and as a result I've a feeling it may be the least successful because of that. The Caterpillar had to be designed from scratch as Tenniel had only ever drawn it from the back, so we had to find

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Above: The Med Hatter, in a moment of rare composure, takes his cues from Director Gavin Miller.

a definite look for him which we decided was a human face".

According to Conway, everybody worked on everything with a lot of overlapping mainly because the lack of money made dividing the work into groups impossible. And the only luxury they allowed themselves was to have the Griffin's wings made with 1000 handmade silk feathers which kept four people busy for most of the hectic pre-production period. But a first was clocked up with *Dream Child* as Conway explains. "We used a drama coach to co-ordinate and rehearse the creatures. The discomforts of wearing a rubber suit for four hours is part and parcel of our trade now and one we will never be able to eliminate. In having every scene blocked out, not to mention suggested movements and voice inflections, it certainly saved a lot of time. This individual rehearsal worked so spectacularly that it seems a certainty to be used in the new Henson fantasy, *Labyrinth*".

All the Lewis Carroll inspired creatures were built with a maximum three-day life expectancy in mind, says Con-

way. He continues, "We did so much on the cheap, and if we had had puppets like these on the *OZ* shoot, they would not have held up. In reality, we were amazed that we didn't let the production down in some respects, as we couldn't rely on the normal Henson back-up. We did fall one and a half days behind schedule during our nine-day shooting stint, but that was due to the lighting and not us. Everything happened so damn fast! We had that 14-week build and the two-week lead up and I'm sitting there thinking it isn't going to get done while tearing my hair out. Nine days later it was all over and it was say goodbye to Lyle and Co. time. Talk about an anti-climax! In all honesty I was shocked by it as I was putting in a 20-hour day working on both *OZ* and *Dream Child* at the same time".

Conway has nothing but praise for Director Miller though, as he was always available for conferences whenever he was needed, and no-one seemed particularly phased by the unusual rigours of working with lifelike puppets either. Except Coral Brown. Con-

way recalls this little anecdote. "I think Coral was slightly put off by it all. At one stage she was miked up and told her make-up lady, 'My dear, 50 years ago people warned me never to work with children or animals. Now look at what I'm working with!' Whether that was meant to be heard or not I don't know, but it's pretty funny all the same".

Regardless, Conway admits that the *Dream Child* experience has been good for the Henson Organisation. He expands on that theory. "We've never worked under such a tight budget, one that even producer Rick McCallum was honest enough to call non-existent. And we've never worked under such pressure. We worked it out as one-fourth of the work load on *The Dark Crystal*, at ten times the speed. Any overtime we did was on our own back. It was a killer just to start and finish on time".

But for a project that nearly ended up as a Stephen Sondheim musical on Broadway, that's what excited Lyle Conway the most. "I can't imagine how they are going to sell this picture", he says, "but it does have the enormous potential to crossover to an audience who would never normally come and see our stuff. You can't pigeon-hole *Dream Child* at all".

VIDEO FILE

Reviews by Barry Forshaw

The fury with which the staff and writers of *Starburst* descended upon poor *Supergirl* to rend her limb from limb resembled a band of *Star Trek* fans pursuing John Brennan. At first I kept making noises like "But is it really that bad? What about the flying sequences? Jerry Goldsmith's score? Helen Slater's looks? etc." But all I received in reply was "No! No! Makes *Dino's King Kong* look better than the original!" and so on.

Well—without trying to be bloody-minded, I went to *Supergirl* (now issued on video by Thorn EMI) damn well determined to find something to like in this much-maligned movie (and it wasn't just Slater who'd put the boot in—next to the *Monthly Film Bulletin* notice, Alan Jones' review seemed like a rave). And although the flaws that so worried everyone are impossible to ignore, I was mildly surprised to find that there were things to enjoy in Jeannot Szwarc's addition to the Kryptonian family saga. But, dealing with the faults first: it is a shame that writer David Odell didn't realise that part of the appeal of the Superman myth is the striking contrast between Clark's mild-mannered persona and his invulnerable alter ego—in *Supergirl*, although Linda Lee is dismissed as a "wimp", the playing up of the "nature child" side of *Supergirl*'s personality finally makes her hardly distinguishable from her plain-clothes identity. It's a shame that Odell and Szwarc have taken the cue for the villains from *Superman I* and *II* rather than *II*, i.e. the bumbling, "camp" inefficiency being stressed (à la Otis and Luthor) rather than the straighter menace of General Zod and his criminal cohorts. In consequence, there's little sense of threat to the heroine—particularly damaging, as the fate of *Argo City* seems not very pressing (and *Supergirl*'s putative mission on earth is to save her city from destruction). Finally, the love interest is tiresome, with its clumsily handled love potions, etc.

But I was going to try to defend the movie, right? Well, Helen Slater is a very fetching Maid of Steel, and Faye Dunaway's villainess is often the right side of camp (unlike Peter Cook's henchman). The flying sequences frequently capture the requisite sense of wonder, and Goldsmith's score is a winner. For all its missed opportunities *Supergirl* is a



Top and above: James Stewart and Kim Novak suffering from a touch of *Vertigo*.

movie you might just enjoy—providing you're in a particular indulgent mood.

MORE HITCHCOCK

Following their issue of Hitchcock's classic *Rear Window* CIC have issued the film that many consider the master's finest, *Vertigo*. Personally, I'd hate to choose between *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest* and *Psycho*, but in a desert island situation, I think I'd opt for a few more visits to the Bates Motel. Still, I can see why mainstream critics pick *Vertigo* as Hitchcock's most complex and interesting study of a disturbed personality. Scottie, the ex-detective hero of the film, so brilliantly incarnated by James Stewart, is one of the cinema's greatest essays in obsession (which, of course, was the title of Brian De Palma's virtual remake of this film) and his attempt to re-mould Kim Novak into the woman for whose death he feels responsible is utterly riveting, despite the very measured pace at which the director unfolds his plot (adapted from a Boileau and Narcejac novel—whose surprising twist Hitchcock casually places

much earlier in his version).

Because of the long unavailability of Hitch's classic, many of *Starburst*'s younger readers will be coming to the film for the first time—to them I'd say: take a deep breath, adjust yourself to the leisurely pace of *Vertigo* and you're in for one of the most hypnotic experiences the cinema has to offer. For De Palma fans, it's a must to catch all those points of reference—apart from the *Obsession* re-make, the "shadowing" of Novak in the museum was re-used as the art gallery sequence in *Dressed to Kill*, and Bernard Herrmann's magnificent score was the inspiration for all his work for De Palma.

SPACE ACE

Phil Kaufman's interesting career continues with *The Right Stuff* (Warner) which is an epic exploration of space travel from the breaking of the sound barrier to John Glenn's triumphant space trips. Kaufman's strategies are constantly surprising: *The Right Stuff* (adapted from Tom Wolfe's book) subverts many of the expected climaxes in its narrative and creates marvelous moments of small-scale drama that are just as

effective as the more important concerns of space travel. Among these, John Glenn's wife (who suffers from a speech impediment) is being staged-managed into a T.V. appearance by Lyndon Johnson — an experience that we know would be horrendous for her. The film presents Glenn as the most establishment-orientated, line-towing member of the group of astronauts, and Kaufman keeps us totally on the edge of our seats as to whether or not he'll have the ability to stand up to the Vice President of the United States. The space sequences are beautifully done, and if you can take the unburied pace and hefty running time, this is a very unusual movie.

ORIENTAL SPOOK

Also from Warners, Kevin Connor's *The House Where Evil Dwells* is a Samurai ghost tale (of the kind tackled by Kaneto Shindo in *Kurozoku*) transposed to modern times, with a young couple possessed by malevolent spirits from an earlier century. Edward Albert and Susan George fare well as the possessed lovers, with Doug McClure (in an underwritten role) as the fatal third ingredient in the triangle. A bloody dismemberment at the beginning and end of the film sandwich a more fragile tale that fails to maintain its hold.

MINDLESS MOVIE

Here at Starburst, we've decided to bestow upon certain films the "Nostromo's Cat" award, (in honour of the otherwise excellent Allen) for the Most Brainless Excuse By Director and Writer for Putting Characters in Mortal Danger. A top contender is *The Horror Star* (VFO). Directed by Norman Thaddeus Vane, this one has Ferdie Mayne as the re-animated corpse of a horror actor decimating the teenagers who desecrate his grave. The nadir of this uninspiring effort is reached after all but two of the cast have been bloodily dispatched (beheading, immolation etc.). Knowing full well that a homicidal monster is roaming the house, the remaining male teenager says to hysterical companion "I'm gonna get the car — run upstairs and pack your stuff." And guess what? Any more comments about this movie would be superfluous. (Except to wonder why directors don't remember one thing about *Psycho* — when Martin Balsam says he's going back to the house to talk to the old woman, the audience squirms — but not out of annoyance at the character's stupid-

ity. It's a shame that careful plotting is almost the last thing current directors worry about.)

GANGSTER EPIC

Brian De Palma's first major venture outside the horror/fantasy genre, *Scarface* (CIC) has had a rough ride from the critics, who disliked its epic length and its grisly violence. The first of these criticisms has some validity — Al Pacino's Cuban drug dealer is not sufficiently interesting a character to justify the tragic stature

De Palma tries to invest him with. But the dazzling technique with which De Palma charts his bloody rise to power still arrests the attention.

NOT RECOMMENDED

Spielberg and Dante were right to warn us about gremlins. I speak from personal experience — one of these malicious creatures somehow got into the "Take Our Word For It" section in my column in *Starburst* 78 and made it seem as if I were recommending *Prisoners of the Lost Uni-*

verse — if any of you were unfortunate enough to rent the video on the basis of this mischievous error, I can only apologise for this — *Starburst* has now called in Dan Ackroyd, Harold Ramis and Bill Murray to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

BRIEF NOTICES

One of the most resonant of all science fiction themes is the "man out of his time" — Wells' Time Traveller reacting (from his 19th century perspective) to future society. In *Swordkill* (EIN), directed by Larry Carroll, a re-awakened Samurai is bemused by our violent modern society. His reaction to such phenomena as TV are more intriguingly handled than the inevitable sword-play.

Normally, this column covers new video titles, unless I'm doing a retrospective on a particular video company or director. But I thought it would be worth looking again at Michael Laughlin's *Dead Kids* (Iver) (A.K.A. *Strange Behaviour*) now that the excellent second part of his proposed "Strange" trilogy, *Strange Invaders*, had made his name more familiar to us. *Dead Kids* is worth a second look; it's another vision of American small town life being subverted by a sinister presence — less well organised than the latter movie, but full of pointers to what was to follow.

Savage Islands (CIC), directed by Ferdinand Fairfax, is a sort of pirate *Indiana Jones*, with the action sequences rattled off at an exhilarating pace. The characters, particularly Tommy Lee Jones' captain, are less well brought off.

Thorn EMI have the granddaddy of all vampire movies in *Nosferatu*, the original Murnau silent classic. This adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* still carries a bizarre charge.

If anybody still needs telling about Rosemary's *Baby* (now re-issued by CIC) let me be the one to do so — and in the strongest term Polanski's classic occult chiller (from Ira Levin's novel) spawned a million rip-offs, but remains the last word in "Cinematic Satanism". Performances are superb — not just Mia Farrow's menaced mother-to-be, but Ruth Gordon's marvellous eccentric neighbour, and John Cassavetes' increasingly sinister husband.



Top: *Buccaneers in space!* Jason and his motley crew from *the* *Pirates*, now on video.

NEW AND FORTHCOMING

As an appetite-whetter for Philippe Mora's *Howling II*, EIN are issuing his earlier *Superman* spoof, *The Return of Captain Invincible*, with Alan Arkin. MGM/UA are issuing a slightly longer, more "adult" version of *Ice Pirates* than the cinema release. Also directed by Steward Raffill, Thorn EMI have *The Philadelphia*

Experiment. Vestron are releasing *Yat, Hunter Of The Future*, and the big news has to be CIC's issue of *Star Trek III — The Search For Spock* together with Hitchcock's classic *Vertigo* (not to mention *Ice Man*, *Testament* and a re-issue of *Rosemary's Baby*). Warners has *Galaxy Of Terror* from the Roger Corman stable. From *Medusa: Devouring Waves*

BABY

Secret Of The Lost Legend.

Dinosaurs return to the screen in a big way this year with the release of *Baby... Secret of the Lost Legend* from Touchstone Films (a division of Walt Disney and the company that made the hit comedy *Splash*). Based on the centuries-old legend that prehistoric animals may still be stalking the jungles of West Africa, *Baby* features the largest and most complex dinosaur family ever created for a film. The models used range from a full scale father (70 feet long and 25 feet high) to a miniature 'hatchling' (30 inches long and 10 inches high). These were designed and constructed by Isidoro Raponi, who with former partner Carlo Rambaldi created the 1976 *King Kong*, the aliens from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and the chest bursting creature from *Alien*.

Starburst American correspondents Randy & Jean-Marc Lofficier recently talked to Raponi about his mechanical effects work for *Baby*.

Starburst: When did you start working on Baby?

Isidoro Raponi: First, I had worked on *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, where I built the mechanical spiders. At the end of that movie, I was approached by Tom Wilhite who, at the time, was the Vice-President of Disney. He asked me about working on a new project they had in mind. That was *Baby*.

Baby started in January 1983. I felt there was a lot of confusion at first. They wanted a family of brontosaurus, but they didn't know exactly what they were going to look like in the movie, or how they were going to move. I understood their preoccupation, and, at this point, I decided to do a test for them — just a general head with a neck, and a tail.

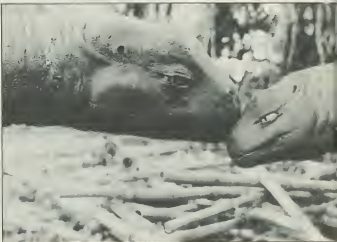
It took almost a month. I used five people from Disney's special effects department and prop shop. There wasn't anybody around at the time who knew the

techniques we would be using if the job went through. With these people, while we made the test model, I could teach them the techniques I wanted to use on the job. The material and the controls —

... we had to have an animal that could could get into a tent between the two heroes, be huge and kind of awkward, but not so big that it would just crush them, or that you wouldn't be able to see them. It still had to be lovable, like a big, big dog or something.

Johnathan Taplin, Producer

... basically everything that we would normally need for the movie. After one month, we were ready with all the tests. We showed the test to Wilhite and the other production people, and they were very impressed.



How long did it take you to build that head?

It took about one month. I think we were ready by the middle of February 1983.

What was the technology that you used to build the test head and tail?

What normally happens in this business is that everything is first designed on paper, before you start working on whatever you intend to build. In this instance, because we were doing a mechanical animal, it was impossible to proceed that way. This was because we were building something that we would eventually have to animate, in order to approximate reality. It is impossible to design such a thing ahead of time, purely on the paper, because later you have to build a mechanism in its skeleton. And there can be no exact design until you determine the shape of the skeleton.

You see, you can design a geometric mechanism, but you can't design one with curves. You have to build all these curves later in the subject. When you are trying to imitate life, the technique is to make everything as smooth and natural as possible. It's much easier to make a geometric mechanism that moves smoothly, say like a car, rather than one that moves like an animal or a person. Because, for the latter, each shape is different, not square, not round or triangular, just different.

Basically, for the model, you used a metal skeleton covered with foam, with cable controls for the motions?

At that point we went through all kinds of materials. In any event it was useful to teach those people before going with the full-size job. So we used metal, plastic, rubber, etc...

When we build a human being, or an animal, we first look at its skin, muscle and skeleton, and then we try to reproduce the



Above: William Katt and Sean Young (ex-*Blade Runner* replicant), as the unlikely foster parents of Baby. Below: a mother and child reunion, courtesy of Isidore Rapoport.

same things with artificial materials. A human being, for instance, has muscles attached to his skeleton. Those muscles move because of the nervous system, which itself is connected to the brain, and the brain is the central computer. We try to follow the same pattern.

We started with the skeleton, and eventually decided to use plastic. Then, we asked ourselves how to build the muscles. There, we went through different compounds, looking for something very soft, because of the mechanical parts. Finally, we found a very extra soft urethane foam. Then, for the skin, we used a kind of latex foam that nobody at Disney even knew about. And even if they had, everybody has a different way to work with this foam. I studied different ways to modify its chemical proportions in order to make it very light and soft, again because of the mechanical parts. In most of the jobs I've seen done outside, they just have gone directly with the formula that comes from the manufacturer.

So you went through all sorts of tests before settling on a technique?

Yes. Each job has different problems and, in this instance, what I really needed to know before I could determine exactly what would finally be required, was the shape and the size of the creature. Also, I needed to know what kind of action they needed it to do. All this helps you determine what kind of problems you're going to encounter in the production.

But the Disney people saw the finished model and liked it?

Yes, they did. It is at that point that they decided to show me the script. As soon as I looked at it, I saw how complicated the job was going to be. I think it was perhaps

the most complicated job I did since 1963! It was difficult not only because of the quantity of effects that were needed, but also because of their quality.

After all, in *Baby* the animals that we were going to build were the principal characters. They had long sequences. Normally, when you build a special effects creature for a film, you only see it for a second or so. Here, people would be looking at *Baby* for five, ten minutes...

That is a very long time, which creates a problem, because in a long sequence, if the effects are not good, people will see all the defects.

I didn't have many expectations about dealing with a cabled dinosaur, because I'd never worked with one before! I was kind of open to seeing the way one worked. We learned as we went.

Bill Norton, Director

Eventually, in May I believe, they found Bill Norton to direct the picture. And in June, they hired Ray Storey as art director. So, Bill Norton came, we met and he saw the miniature *Baby*. Then, there was some disagreement about *Baby's* size between Bill Norton, Tom Whitte, Lee Dyer and the writers. I believe the writers wanted a small *Baby*, and the others wanted it bigger. For us, of course, it was extremely important to know what size *Baby* had to be. The size really determined the specific nature of all the jobs that had to be done. All these aspects are connected. For instance, once I knew the size, I could start looking for a person to go inside the suit that would be needed for some sequences...





We also had some more discussions on how Baby should look. In fact, all this started even before Bill Norton came in. In order to determine the kind of look Disney wanted for Baby, we had built a miniature, three feet long and nine inches high. The production people were scared that it would look too much like E.T. At that time, E.T. was pretty big, and they were afraid to be criticized if we came up with something that would look too much like an E.T. rip-off.

Eventually, between all of this and what the script required, we found the type of character we wanted for the movie. We wanted to stay as close to reality as we could, of course, but at the same time, there was a problem because Baby belonged to the brontosaurus family, which is a reptile. And reptiles don't normally show much emotion. Their faces look cold. So we had to create something more attractive, so that the audience would like what they saw. For this, we ended up changing some of the elements. For instance, we brought the nose down closer to the mouth, so that Baby could sniff, instead of leaving it on the top of the head, between the ears...

Otherwise, we designed a creature that would immediately be recognized as a dinosaur, but people wouldn't know what kind of dinosaur it was. We took the size and the shape of the brontosaurus. All the experts had told us how the skin should look like. Designing the eyes was a big problem because round pupils were out of the question, again because it would have looked too much like E.T. So we had to find some kind of eyes that would look nice, and that both the director and the production would like.

When Bill Norton effectively took over as director, sometime at the beginning of June '83, we had finished the sculpting and were ready to move ahead. Unfortunately, he looked at it and decided that it was too big! At that point, we almost threw everything away, although we eventually ended up using the big sculpture to cast a mold. We made a plywood sketch of the Baby we had already sculpted, and they decided it would look better if it was smaller. So, finally, they decided that they wanted Baby to be 36 inches high and 10 feet long.

The next step was then to find people to go inside the suit. Based on our experience and the tests we had made, we pretty much knew how much weight these people were going to have to carry, how they would carry it, etc.

Were they totally encased by the costume?

Yes. They were bent down at 90 degrees. When we built the suit, we asked the

people to tell us how comfortable it was. We always try to see if we can make it feel better. We put in fans and the like. We really rely on their advice. We interviewed about 150 people for the job, to finally select three. We spent three whole days, working twelve hours a day, to find the most suitable people.

What kind of criteria were you looking for?
First, the size, of course. For our suit, we needed people about four and a half feet tall. Also, when we hired the three people we wanted, they had to be the same size, because they had to use the same costume and we didn't want to have to do any fittings. The only thing we could change was the straps on their backs where they had to support the dinosaur's weight.

Strangely enough, after all this complicated selection process, we found out that the three people we had hired all had one thing in common: they were all karate experts. They had all fantastic body control. Which was perfect for our purposes. They used their arms with extensions attached for the front legs of the animal, and their legs for its back legs. We had to develop the extensions for the front legs because, otherwise, they would have had to bend too much, and blood would have come down to their heads.

For the purpose of selecting these people, we had created a kind of body that was just the shape of a dinosaur. Body, neck, tail and head, but no finish, no details. We wanted to find out approximately how much weight the whole thing would be, in order to be manoeuvrable. We had to find out before we started building the final suit, of course. We also wanted to make sure that the suit would be balanced normally, because it was attached to the operator at only one place. Since most of the original weight was in the head and the neck, we had to balance it by adding some weight in the tail.

We made a cast of the body of one of them, in the position that they would be inside the suit. Then, we made a figure out of plaster, in order to create an armature. That way, we could figure how much space we would need to leave inside the costume for the operator. We covered the armature in plaster, and poured clay over it, and from there we started to sculpt.

I ended up building seven Baby suits. I also built two miniature Mother suits and two miniature Father suits. At that time, they weren't terribly important in the story. But later, the mother became almost the second most important character in the picture. Originally, we were supposed to shoot the scenes with the mother suit in Africa. But when they decided to expand the mother's role, I had a talk with the producer and I said it'd be better to do that on a set, where we'd have more control. *What about the scale? People that were the right size for the Baby suit would have been wrong for the mother suit?*

That's why it was so important to get the problem of Baby's size licked up from the very beginning. The size of the Baby that

we had already made was going to determine the size of the miniature of its mother. We knew from all the books and the experts we talked to that the mother would have had to be around 65 to 70 feet. The ratio we had previously established between the full-size Baby and its miniature version was one of the 1 to 4. So, we said that, if the mother was to be 60 feet, then we had to make a 15 feet miniature.

So we started preparing the suits. Because of the time pressure, we worked like in an assembly line. I had five people with me, and I put one in charge of the rubber room, one in charge of making skeletons and the muscles, one for the mechanical head, one for the mechanical neck and one for the mechanical tail. This was at the beginning of September '83. *When did you go on location?*

Sometime in the middle of October. They had finally decided on Ivory Coast in August. Before, they were considering various other places: Mexico, Kenya, Cameroon, Jamaica, which was a problem too. I needed to know which location we would be going to, because of the temperature, the humidity, etc. These are all factors that you have to take into consideration when you build a suit. Because of the material, and the people that will be inside the suit.

How did the location work?

It was full of problems. All the material finally arrived on 20th November, and they decided to start shooting on 5th December. So I had only about a week and a half to put together everything, assemble the suits, paint them, etc. When I arrived in the Ivory Coast, I found that they had not planned any space to open the effects shop. There was an airport hangar where they were storing an airplane, but when it rained, the water leaked in. And there were problems with the electricity and the telephone.

Communications weren't too good either. For instance, after we started in that shop, they found out they needed to have a raft built to carry the full-size mother upriver. But the shop was so small we couldn't do it there, because we were working on assembling the Baby at the same time, and when you are doing mechanical or welding jobs, you can't work near flammable materials like the ones we were using. So we had to find another shop 40 miles away, and we had to break up the crew.

You did come back to finish the miniature work in Los Angeles after all?

Yes. We did find some people in Africa, but doing it there would have been enormously complex, so I asked the producer to come back and do the miniatures down here, and he agreed. We spent four or five weeks doing that. It was much easier, because we could find the right kind of people we needed. They had to be about six foot tall. The people we eventually chose had only one week to rehearse but they were fantastic. They spent up to two hours inside the suit without coming out.



THE FANTASTIC ART OF DAVID HARDY



Although the name of David Hardy may not be immediately familiar to a number of followers of visual fantasy, his astronomical paintings have gained him much acclaim, and last year he was voted the "Best European SF Graphic Artist". Recently he also completed (unfortunately uncredited) work as a production painter on *The Neverending Story*. Lawrence Keene looks at the career of this up and coming fantasy artist.

Then in 1965 Hardy received a call from MGM Studios asking if he was free to work with director Stanley Kubrick on an ambitious new SF film: *2001: A Space Odyssey*. For various reasons Hardy never did work on the film, but it was partly this experience that made him go freelance in September 1965. Using paintings prepared for his first one-man exhibition, held at the London Planetarium in 1968 (coinciding with the opening of 2001), David did however make his own 8mm movie which he entitled 2002: *A Space Oddity* (David Bowie's similarly titled record came a year later). A fine-art print, *Stellar Radiance*, also followed from the exhibition, and reached No. 6 in the Top Ten Prints list of 1970. Many other exhibi-

Left: *Tallaks Invasion* (London). David Hardy's cover for the German edition of Dr. Who and the Dalek Invasion of Earth. Babylon Productions art for *The Neverending Story* illustrating the young hero, Atreyu, at the Sphinx Gate.



David Hardy started painting spacecraft and planetary landscapes in his early teens. He illustrated his first book for Patrick Moore in 1954, in the five days before joining the RAF for National Service. He went on to produce large exhibition paintings for the British Interplanetary Society, book jackets, record sleeves, a factual series for *TV Century 21* — a spin-off comic from Gerry Anderson's *Thunderbirds* — and a variety of other projects, all in his spare time whilst working in the design office at Cadbury's, near his home in Bourneville.

In 1963 Hardy was asked to design a spacecraft and paint some lunar backgrounds for back-projection in a Christmas production at the London Palladium, *Man in the Moon*. Also around that time he was involved with Fred Hoyle's play *Rockets in Urss Major* at the Mermaid Theatre. Again he was to provide background planets for back-projection, but this time would be animated.

tions have now been held in Britain and abroad, especially in Germany, where his SF work is very popular.

HIGHLY ACCLAIMED

Hardy has also recently produced a number of 360-degree panoramas for projection in the dome of Stuttgart Planetarium (and one of Mars, for London), depicting alien cities, a prehistoric Earth, Easter Island, landscapes of other planets, and so forth. Dr. Hans-Ulrich Keller, Director of Stuttgart Planetarium, writes: "David Hardy is one of the best planetarium-artists in the world — perhaps the best." Readers of the US science fiction/fact magazine *Analog* voted a Hardy cover "Best of 1983", and at *Seacon/Eurocon* at Easter 1984 he was voted "Best European SF Graphic Artist".

In 1972 Hardy collaborated with Patrick Moore on *Challenge of the Stars*, updated as *New Challenge* in 1977 (largely because the publisher wanted to take advantage of the interest in Star



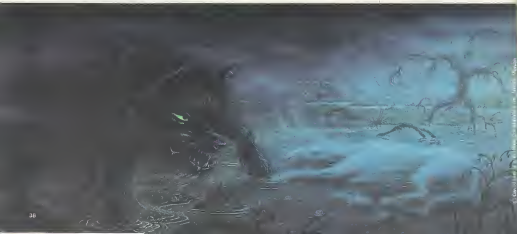
► *Wars*, then about to be released). As a sequel to this, the artist came up with the idea of a sort of 'interstellar travel brochure', written and illustrated as if we already live in the future. He asked top SF author Bob Shaw to write the text around his paintings instead of the reverse as is normally the case, and they worked on the project entitled *Galactic Tours*, during 1978. Since 1974 Hardy has also written and illustrated six books of his own, including *Energy and the Future* and *Atlas of the Solar System*, and produced covers for the U.S. monthly *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. He also painted the planet backgrounds for the second series of BBC's *Blake's Seven*, and has worked on numerous other TV projects. But production work on a major film still evaded him. This was soon to change.

A SCREEN CHALLENGE

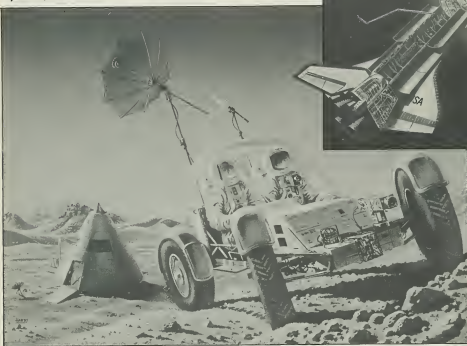
As a result of his paintings for *Galactic Tours*, Hardy's SF work (as distinct from



© David Hardy



Top left: Atréyu, astride the Luck Dragon, is tossed around by the Wind Giants. A scene finally omitted from *The Neverending Story*. Middle left: A space art painting by Hardy entitled *Marshmallow Moon*. Bottom left: The wolf, Gmork, finds Atréyu's pony drowned in the *Swamps of Sedness*. Right: A technical cutaway of the Space Shuttle (for insight magazine). Below: A Hardy illustration of the Mars Rover exploring alien terrain. Bottom: The *Mers* expedition leaves Earth orbit.



his accurate astronomical art for which he was perhaps more widely known) was seen by a greater number of people in the film industry. In September 1982 co-producer of *The Neverending Story*, Deter Geissler, employed Hardy as a production artist on the film. He worked at Munich's Bavaria Film Platz, next to the vast hall in which Brian Johnson's special effects team were constructing the Luck Dragon, Rock Bitar and other fanciful denizens of *'Fantasia'*. Sharing the studios were storyboard artists, visualizers and costume designers such as ex-Disney artist Juan Japí - an Argentine by birth, Briton Peter Classer, Yugoslavian Josip Trupinovic, and Jimmy Stepanoff, all under the direction of Italian Count Ul de Rico. A truly international team, and not a German among them!

Unfortunately, his involvement on the film is uncredited, as a different technique was eventually introduced using models which could be manipulated and re-photographed instead of time-consuming paintings. Such are the vagaries of the movie business.

This year, and again because of his



work on *Galactic Tours*, Hardy was approached by a company currently making a film called *Silverworld*, with a story and music by composer/songwriter Kenny Young (of *'Under the Boardwalk'* fame). Little is known as yet about this project, but Hardy has so far produced a number of pre-production paintings of *'The Triadon'* (which he also designed). *'The Triadon'* is a future town set in the mutated jungle some distance from the sterile, domed *Silverworld* itself. (No, it's not like *Logan's Run*, I'm assured).

So David Hardy has finally achieved at least part of his ambition to work on films. His future plans involve work on matte paintings, an area to which his style is ideally suited. As was once said about his work it "can cause you to wonder why we're not in more of a hurry to explore the universe. And that's exactly (David Hardy's) intention."

Sales of David Hardy's prints, book and other related merchandise are handled under the trade name of *'Astro Art'* (99 Southam Road, Hill Green, Birmingham B26 0AB, England).

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INDIANA JONES— ALIAS HARRISON FORD

Okay, we've got the message. In response to a flood of mail after we mentioned Ye Editor's extracurricular project, *The Harrison Ford Story* (1984, Zomba Books), we've arranged to mail order the book for the benefit of Ford fans who've had trouble tracking down a copy.

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• IT'S ONLY A MOVIE •

A Column by John Brosnan

"One who is better than the rest of you is a guy who lives in Somerville, Massachusetts, name of John G. Maguire. And John G. is better than most of you because not only won't he be supporting corrupt films by buying a ticket to something he's been told over-and-over-and-over is The One Not to Miss! but he can smell that puke smell made by the Worm of Evil and he protects his kids from such movies."

That was Harlan Ellison speaking, in a recent issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, about a certain movie that both he and John G. Maguire didn't particularly like (though John G. didn't exactly see the movie; he just accepted Harlan's word that he should avoid it, which is why he gets such fulsome praise from Harlan).

But what movie, reeking from the pong of the Worm of Evil, are they talking about?

Grem'lins. Yes, according to Harlan Ellison, *Grem'lins* is a veritable Attila the Hun among films. "It's a corrupt thing, vicious at its core; meanspirited and likely to cause harm to your moral sense. Specifically you were warned: keep little kids away from this thing."

But, alas, not enough people took heed of his warning, apart from good old John G. of Massachusetts, and now the Stench of the Worm is loose over America and there is much gnashing of teeth and rending of garments. . . .

To be serious for a moment, I do agree with St. Harlan that *Grem'lins* probably isn't suitable for young children, say those under 12, and I think the American censors should have given it a higher certificate than they apparently did (presumably it was PG in the States, whereas in the UK it got a 15). But having said that I still feel that Harlan overdoes his moral indignation about *Grem'lins*, to put it mildly. I found the tone of his piece, in fact, to be downright arrogant.

I don't mind it when a film critic expresses an opinion of a movie which is diametrically opposed to my own but I resent it when a critic presumes to lecture me as well as accuse me of having a severe lapse of morals because I happened to like a particular movie that he didn't. Yes, I must confess all; I liked *Grem'lins*. I don't think it was a great movie—I preferred *Ghostbusters*—but it amused and entertained me, Worm stench and all.

St. Harlan's moralising approach even extends to the casting of Phoebe Cates as the hero's girlfriend. Her char-



Billy (Zach Galligan) shows his Mogwai to schoolteacher Roy Henson (Glynn Turman) in this *Grem'lins* scene just reeking of Harlan Ellison's Worm of Evil.

acter in *Grem'lins* is supposed to be an 'apple-cheeked virgin' but he points out that she has 'managed to shed her clothes in every film I've seen in which she has a speaking part.' Good heavens, the shameless hussy! But is St. Harlan suggesting that her presence in the movie, even though she remains fully clothed throughout, is yet another of the movie's corrupting influences on its younger viewers? If so, it's a very old-fashioned attitude, and an odd one for Harlan Ellison to express seeing as he's been a tireless campaigner for the feminist cause in the USA.

But then the whole piece is couched in Old Testament terms. Reading it you get the impression that Steven Spielberg and Lucifer are on more than a first name basis; for example, "Shadows darken the mythic Spielberg kingdom", "... this movie fits neatly into the Spielberg canon because it lies under the shadow of his *Gray Eminence* throughout . . .", "... Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom lets loose the Worms of Evil with its brut-

alization of children as a device to shock . . . the first true glimpse of the darker side of the force that motivates the Lucas-Spielberg films . . ."

Good grief—dark shadows, gray eminences, and all those worms of evil! The worms even get into his closing paragraph: "We have all taken bites from the apple. And what is worse than finding a Worm of Evil in the apple is finding *half* a Worm."

No, don't ask me what the last bit means, or where the other half of the Worm got to; all I know is that it seems a terrible waste of emotional energy to get so worked up over a piece of Hollywood horror fantasy.

Remember, Harlan, it's only a movie.

BROSINAN ON BAFTA

As I write the four nominations for BAFTA's Best Film Award have just been announced. They are *The Dresser*, *The Killing Fields*, *Pan's*, *Texas* and *A Private Function*. What a surprise to see that three of the four are British! It's a bit pathetic, really. I don't see why BAFTA doesn't make the film awards a

purely British affair in the same way that the TV awards are. That way the embarrassing British chauvinism that the award results annually highlight could be concealed.

By the time you read this you'll know who the winner is so let me make the prediction that *The Killing Fields* will get the Best Film award. Why? Well, apart from the fact it's British it's the *Gandhi* of its year. Like *Gandhi* it's a big, serious picture about an important theme which makes it, as far as the critics and the BAFTA judges are concerned, a great movie. Look, for example, at the films of Stanley Kramer. He made serious movies about important themes, such as *Judgement at Nuremberg* and *On the Beach*, but today most of them seem pretty turgid, self-important affairs, despite their high moral tone. I fear that David Puttnam, producer of *The Killing Fields*, has become a 1980s British version of Stanley Kramer. What the British film industry really needs are British versions of, dare I say it, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg.

Worms and all.

I was with great enthusiasm that I welcomed the new Granada 13 part series *Television*. In the first episode it discussed, at great length, the social aspects of TV and whether it is solely responsible for people's attitudes to news and current events. It even reminded us that we all have a tendency to watch too much television. (There's a certain irony here if you think about it.) However, as the weeks progressed the presenters of the programme settled down to discuss the history of the media, as seen through the eyes of producers, actors, writers and viewers. American television was singled out for its influence on our whole understanding of professional TV programming. But for the more discerning members of its audience, the series was a superb opportunity to savour the delights of old and fondly remembered television programmes.

In conjunction with Granada, Century Publishing have produced every

informative book by Francis Wheen. It fails, however, as do so many book tie-ins to long running documentaries, to fully expand the visual impact of television. Tiny photographs in the page margins are very inadequate in a book of this type. But it's a brave attempt to catalogue what must surely be a vast amount of material. Especially when compared to similar publications that concentrate on just one aspect of television. Jeff Greenfield's *The First Fifty Years*, for example, published in America by Abrams, or ITV's profusely illustrated *Eye On TV*, looking back at the first 21 years of Independent Television.

The Granada series tends to pinpoint the Sixties as one of the most innovative decades in British television history. Looking back, it was certainly a time of great change, and for the benefit of TV Zone readers, introduced us to a wide variety of fantasy programming. Remember Patrick McGeehan as secret agent

TV ZONE

by Richard Holliss

John Draks, in the original half hour series *Danger Man*, made in 1960? He even had a mid-Atlantic accent, fortunately losing it as the series progressed. However, his on screen popularity encouraged a number of American film producers to cast him in feature film roles and so help the sale

of some British movies abroad. It was also in 1960 that we first met Ian Hendry as Dr. Geoffrey Brent in *Police Surgeon*. The series that was later to develop into a far more successful format with an entirely new title. Honor Blackman joined the cast, replacing Hendry, and *The Avengers* was born. Also in 1960 Anthony Newley starred in his own fantasy series, *The Strange World of Gurney Slade*, in which he conversed with plants and animals. It was, unfortunately, quite disastrous and cancelled after just one season.

In 1962 Roger Moore appeared as Simon Templar alias *The Saint*. The series lasted for seven years, during which time Moore turned his attention to writing and producing some episodes. He became a leading figure in front of and behind the camera. He even had the opportunity to explore more fantastic territory with one story about the Loch Ness monster and another featuring giant mutated ants. One of ITV's slickest shows, it was sold to 80 countries worldwide.

In 1964, Bamber Gascoigne left Granada's long running programme *Cinema* and was replaced by Derek Granger. Successive hosts included Michael Scott and Clive James. Each week the show linked new film clips with old style movies. There were special programmes on science fiction, horror, special effects and animation. A sort of adult Clapperboard, it ran for over eight years. American series such as *My Favourite Martian*, *Bewitched*, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* and *The Munsters* were imported from the States. Thanks to Channel 4 the majority of these created cult followings and can still be seen on TV today.



Left: Pint-size science fiction drama with Steve Matheson, Gary Conway and Deanna Lund, in Irwin Allen's ambitious special effects series *Land of the Giants*.

In 1965, with the television licence costing as much as £5.00 a year, new series included *Thunderbirds* and *Turn Out the Lights*. The former proved to be the ultimate in puppet shows, hot on the heels of *Fireball XL5* and *Stingray*. Its huge success turned Gerry Anderson's small film company into a multi-million pound empire, placing his name among the great TV pioneers. In *Turn Out the Lights*, comedy actor Arthur Lowe found himself chasing all kinds of supernatural creatures. 20th Century Fox started running Irwin Allen's long awaited *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, which was networked throughout the ITV regions and Allen's second SF series *Lost in Space* began its three year run on Granada Television.

In 1966, Steve Forrest starred as the hard hitting antique dealer in *The Baron*, a sort of rip-off of *The Saint*. The excellent series *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* introduced quite a few new actors to television stardom. We were later to be treated to a BBC series called *Out of the Unknown* that was infinitely better. The same year *The Man from UNCLE* were joined by Stephanie Powers in her own series, *The Girl from UNCLE* which was very silly and was quickly axed by the American network. Sam Kydd starred in Rediffusion's children's thriller serial *Oryando*, and across the Atlantic the hour long series of *Danger Man* won a Hollywood Screen Producers' Guild Award for the best produced TV programme.

In 1967 Aml Macdonald (remember her in *The Avengers* Return of the Cybermats episode!) appeared in *At Last the 1948 Show*, of which little original footage still exists. With John Cleese, Tim Brooke Taylor, Graham Chapman and Marty Feldman, it was to pave the way for the more zany manic comedy shows to follow. These included *Do Not Adjust Your Set*, also starring David Jason as Captain Fantastic, and Monty Python's *Flying Circus*. Another Saint rip-off was *Man in a Suitcase*, starring Richard Bradford as the rugged Sixties superhero and Edward Woodward in *Carlin*. Patrick McGeehan, meanwhile, achieved immortality as No. 6 in the huge out series *The Prisoner*. Additional children's shows included *Timeslip*, *The Lion*, *the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Flower of Gloster*, which probably featured one of the most terrifying sequences in a single episode of a children's series to date. Remember if you can the haunted wood and the children being awoken in the middle of the night by the most blood curdling scream?

1969 was the year of the first moon landing and both ITV and BBC held



extensive coverage of the event. The BBC's format won hands down, in my estimation, with science experts James Burke and Patrick Moore. TV Times science editor Peter Fairley presented the ITV show accompanied by Alastair Burnet. From America we had *Star Trek*, slipping into the old *Dr Who* slot on Saturday evenings, *Land of the Giants*, *The Time Tunnel*, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* and highly successful re-runs of *The Flintstones*.

If, for no other reason, Television has helped to keep alive a lot of these memories and many thanks to producer Brian Blake who compiled the

series for Granada. With the advent of more sophisticated satellite, video and cable (remember the viewer in the first episode who looked forward to increasing his station reception from 300 to 600 channels within the next three years), technology and television is changing not only our way of life, but also that of its own.

For easier reference here are some brief credit details to some of the shows mentioned earlier: *Turn Out the Lights*, Arthur Lowe (Leonard Swindley). Produced by Derek Granger.

The Baron, Steve Forrest (The Baron), Sue Lloyd (Cordelia). Pro-

duced by Monty Berman. *Timeslip*, Cheryl Burfield (Liz Skinner), Spencer Banks (Simon Randall). Produced by John Cooper. *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, Hope Langa (Mrs. Muir), Edward Mulhare (Capt. Daniel Gregg).

SNEAK PREVIEW

To round off this month, a teaser for a brand new series from Polestar Films, a new British based company with heavy American involvement. Already on the cards are two projects entitled *UFOsnuts* and *Saurus*. But the most advanced work centres on the company's hugely impressive science fiction series, set in the 21st century, called *Starguard*. Featuring the exploits of a secret organisation set up to fight evil and operating from beneath a famous mystical landmark. The cast includes Commander Jason Havlin, Professor Vernon Wells and their highly trained space team, Ranger, Vostok, Vanguard, Ariane, Gemini, Amber and a robot called Teistar. To assist them in their battles against aliens and monsters is an array of futuristic machinery, including the high speed Falcon, land vehicles *Tarantula*, *Armadillo* and *Firefly*, and sophisticated interstellar craft, *Questar*, *Transpod* and *Vulture*. The creators of *Starguard* are still keeping their project under a veil of tight security, however, I do know that it's the result of a multi-talented team of writers, producers and special effects people. All of whom have an extensive background in feature film production. Judging by the photographs on this page the show is going to create a great deal of interest among science fiction fans.



Top: *Starguard*'s Falcon at full speed. Above: Commander Jason Havlin contemplates the future for Polestar Film's new project.



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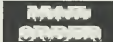
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Emerging from a cinema after seeing *Dune* recently with glazed eyes and a numb brain, I decided that I really have become jaded with most fantasy and science fiction, whether in print or on the screen. I thought *Dune* was a crummy film, having all the flaws of science fiction and none of its virtues. It managed to be portentous yet shallow, hectic yet boring, and there was scarcely a trace of real imagination in it. Give me an episode of *Hill Street Blues* any day.

Why grumble? Well, it's simply a prelude to saying that this is my last *Book World* column. After nearly thirty issues of *Starburst*, I've decided to call it a day. Don't all cheer at once. Since taking over the *Book World* column I've read more fantasy and science fiction books than I've ever done before, and, believe me, it's bad for your brain in the long run. The trouble is that there's so much crud about (this is true of any creative field, of course) that reading significant quantities of the stuff on a regular basis is a bit like emptying a rubbish bin into your head: it tends to fill your mind up with dross. Let's dignify all this grumbling with a quote from George Orwell: "Prolonged indiscriminate reviewing of books involves constantly inventing reactions towards books about which one has no spontaneous feelings whatsoever." Too royal, George.

From all the books I read during my stint on *Starburst* there were an appreciable few I did enjoy, despite all my moans, and this month I thought I'd recap on those. Among the most cheering were two first novels by British SF writers who seem certain to go on to establish a solid reputation for themselves. Philip Mann's *The Eye of the Queen* (Gollancz and Granada) was an intelligent and well-crafted novel about alien contact, and a remarkably assured debut. Mary Gentle's *Golden Witchbreed* (Gollancz and Arrow) also presented a detailed portrait of an alien society on another world, and was a great commercial success. These two books are evidence that good new British writers are still emerging despite the difficult market conditions. Also worthy of a mention is *Demon-4* by David Mace (Granada), a flawed first novel which nevertheless contains hints that the author may go on to produce more accomplished work.

Another first novel which had a great impact on me was the splendid *Lanark* by Alasdair Gray (Jonathan Cape and Granada), a highly imaginative story set in Glasgow and its

BOOK WORLD

Reviews by Chris Charles

bizarre alter-ego, Unthank. Though a sprawling and uneven book, *Lanark* is bold in concept and it contains many passages of great power and invention. Gray is hardly a new writer, having been writing short stories

for many years; but *Lanark* is the kind of book that seems to spring out of nowhere, so different is it from most fiction. Gray followed this novel with 1982 *Janine* (Cape), a smaller but better-crafted novel, full of sex and

rage. These two books make many of the favoured novels of the British Literary Establishment read like polite and trivial gossip.

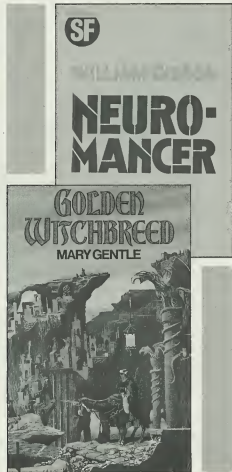
One book which seemed to vanish without trace but deserved a far wider readership was *Leifstan's Place* by Richard Giring (Hamlyn), a wonderfully evocative series of stories all set around a Devonshire village at various time-periods from prehistory to World War I. Strictly speaking, it wasn't fantasy, and yet the quality of the imagination displayed in the writing makes the stories themselves transcend mere realism.

Robert Holdstock's *Mythago Wood* (Gollancz) had a similar quality of a fresh and powerful vision at work. This fantasy involves the creation of mythic archetypes in a stretch of ancient woodland, and it simply fulfils the author's earlier promise. In the science-fiction field, Garry Kilworth's *The Songbirds of Pain* (Gollancz) was one of the best short story collections of recent years, a fine showcase for the author's fertile imagination and proof that some of the most effective SF is still being written in short form.

So much for British writers. The major producers of fantasy and science fiction are, of course, the Americans. I greatly enjoyed Jonathan Carroll's *The Land of Laughs* (Arrow), a bizarre and original fantasy about a children's writer whose creations are discovered to be real. Another impressive arrival was William Gibson, whose *Neuromancer* (Gollancz) is a very modern SF novel dealing with computer cowboys who can directly link their psyches into the electronic realms of computer programmes. *Neuromancer* is a fast-paced thriller and creates one of the most visual and convincing future worlds I've ever come across. Could this novel be the first of a new breed of science fiction? We shall see.

On the horror front, I enjoyed George R. R. Martin's *Fevre Dream* (Gollancz and Sphere), a very cinematic novel about vampires on Mississippi steamboats in the 19th century. More subtle, but just as good, was Suzi McKee-Charnas's *The Vampire Tapestry* (Granada), a modern treatment of the bloodsucker legend which is rich in allusions and psychological insight. The best shocker I encountered was *Lamia* by Tristan Travis (Star), a book about a sequence of horrific murders which is as gripping as anything by Stephen King. Why it wasn't a megaseller is a mystery to me.

In all, there have been quite a few jewels in the rubble, and I've enjoyed trying to sort them out. Hope you have too.



• DATA BANK •

Information from the filing cabinet of Dr Sally Gary



Here we are again! This month, as promised, the column is an all-index affair. Dead useful for you to clip and keep for your scrapbooks — does anyone keep scrapbooks any more, or am I just showing my age?

COMIC CUTS

Here's a real humdinger of a question. "Could you list all the movies which adapted fantasy comic strips to the screen?" asks Stephen Nicholson of Stratford-on-Avon. I'm tempted to answer, "No!" but I won't. I will point out though that this one took me months to research, so if I miss anything, be gentle with me. To keep this listing from getting out of hand, I've confined myself to including only the directors and the cast... or this list'd probably take up a whole issue of the magazine by itself. Numbers of episodes indicate serials.

Flash Gordon (1936, 13 eps). Dir: Frederick Stephani. Cast: Buster Crabbe (as Flash), Jean Rogers, Charles

Middleton, Priscilla Lawson, Frank Shannon.

Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars (1938, 15 eps). Dir: Ford Beebe/Robert Hill. Cast: Buster Crabbe, Jean Rogers, Charles Middleton, Frank Shannon, Donald Kerr.

Mandrake the Magician (1939, 12 eps). Dir: Sam Nelson/Norman Deming. Cast: Warren Hull (as Mandrake), Doris Weston, Al Kiklime, Rex Downing, Edward Earle.

Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe (1940, 12 eps). Dir: Ford Beebe/Ray Taylor. Cast: Buster Crabbe, Carol Hughes, Charles Middleton, Frank Shannon, Shirley Deane.

The Adventures of Captain Marvel (1941, 12 eps). Dir: William Whitney. Cast: Tom Tyler (as Captain Marvel), Frank Coghlan Jr (Billy Batson), William Benedict, Louise Currie, Robert Strange, John Davidson, George Pembroke.

Spy Smasher (1942, 12 eps). Dir: William Whitney. Cast: Kane Richmond (as Spy Smasher), Sam Flint, Marguerite Chapman, Hans Schumm, Tristram Coffin.

Batman (1943, 15 eps). Dir: Lambert Hillyer. Cast: Lewis Wilson (as Batman), Douglas Croft (Robin), J. Carroll Naish, Charles Middleton.

The Phantom (1943, 15 eps). Dir: B. Reeves Eason. Cast: Tom Tyler (as The Phantom), Kenneth McDonald, Frank Shannon, Jeanne Bates, Ace the Wonder Dog.

Captain America (1944, 15 eps). Dir: John English/Elmer Clifton. Cast: Dick Purcell (Captain America), Lorna Gray, Lionel Atwill, Charles Trowbridge.

Superman (1948, 15 eps). Dir: Spencer Bennet/Thomas Carr. Cast: Kirk Alyn, Noel Neill, Tommy Bond, Carole Foreman, George Meeker.

Batman and Robin (1949, 15 eps). Dir: Spencer Bennet. Cast: Robert Lowery (as Batman), John Duncan (Robin), Jane Adams, Lyle Talbot.

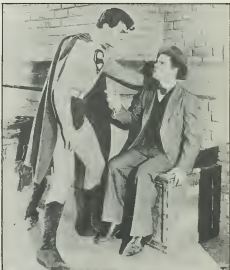
Atom Man vs Superman (1950, 15 eps). Dir: Spencer Bennet. Cast: Kirk Alyn (as Superman), Noel Neill, Lyle Talbot, Tommy Bond.

Captain Video (1951, 15 eps). Dir: Spencer Bennet/Wallace Grissell. Cast: Judd Holdren (as Captain Video), Larry Stewart, George Eldredge, Gene Roth.

Blackhawk (1952, 15 eps). Dir: Spencer Bennet/Fred Sears. Cast: Kirk Alyn (as Blackhawk), Carole Foreman, John Crawford, Michael Fox, Don Harvey.

Modesty Blaise (1966). Dir: Joseph Losey. Cast: Monica Vitti (as Modesty), Dirk Bogarde, Terence Stamp, Harry Andrews, Michael Craig. 119 mins.

Danger Diabolik (1966). Dir: Mario Bava. Cast: John Phillip Law (as Diabolik), Marisa Mell, Adolpho Celi.



Top left: "Yes Robin, this city is filled with weird people," Robert Lowery and John Duncan as Batman and Robin (1949) respectively. Above: "You're Kirk Alyn as Superman (1948) and I claim my CSI!" says Tommy Bond as Jimmy Olsen.

Terry Thomas. 88 mins.

Batman (1966). Dir: Leslie Martinson. Cast: Adam West (as Batman), Burt Ward (Robin), Lee Merriwether, Cesar Romero, Burgess Meredith, Frank Gorshin, Alan Napier. 105 mins.

The Witches (1966, Le Streghe). "A Night Like Any Other" segment. Dir: Vittorio de Sica. Cast: Silvano Mangano, Clint Eastwood, Armando Bottin (as Superman), Gianni Gori (Diabolik), Paolo Gozzino (Mandrake), Angelo Santi (Flash Gordon), Piero Torrisi (Batman).

Barbarella (1968). Dir: Roger Vadim. Cast: Jane Fonda (as Barbarella), John Phillip Law, David Hemmings, Milo O'Shea, Marcel Marceau, Anita Pallenberg. 98 mins.

Tales from the Crypt (1972). Dir: Freddie Francis. Cast: Ralph Richardson, Peter Cushing, Joan Collins, Richard Green, Patrick Magee, Ian Hendry. 92 mins.

Vault of Horror (1973). Dir: Roy Ward Baker. Cast: Daniel Massey, Anna Massey, Terry Thomas, Glynnis Johns, Curt Jurgens, Tom Baker. 87 mins.

Spider-Man (1977). Dir: E. W. Swackhammer. Cast: Nicholas Hammond (as Spider-Man), Lisa Eilbacher, Michael Pataki, Jeff Donnell. 92 mins.

The Incredible Hulk (1977). Dir: Kenneth Johnson. Cast: Lou Ferrigno (as the Hulk), Bill Bixby (David Banner), Susan Sullivan, Jack Colvin, Brandon Cruz. 93 mins.

Dr Strange (1978). Dir: Philip DeGuere. Cast: Peter Hooten (as Dr Strange), Jessica Walter, Eddie Benton, John Mills, David Hooks. 94 mins.

Spider-Man Strikes Back (1978). Dir: Ron Slatof. Cast: Nicholas Hammond, Robert Simon, Michael Pataki, Robert Alda, Chip Fields. 93 mins.

Spider-Man and the Dragon's Challenge (1979). Dir: Don McDougall. Cast: Nicholas Hammond, Myron Healey, Benson Fong. 96 mins.

Captain America (1979). Dir: Ron Holcomb. Cast: Reb Brown (as Captain America), Len Birman, Heather Menzies, Steve Forrest, Robin Mattison. 94 mins.

Superman (1978). Dir: Richard Donner. Cast: Christ-



Above: See the Men of Steel deflect a laser beam with his bare hand! Christopher Reeve in *Superman II* (1980). Below left: "It ain't easy being green," thinks Dick Durock as *Swamp Thing* (1982). Below right: "Geze into my crystalball," proposes Peter Hooten as *Dr Strange* (1978).

opher Reeve (as Superman), Margot Kidder, Marlon Brando, Gene Hackman, Ned Beatty, Valerie Perrine, Glenn Ford. 143 mins.

Flash Gordon (1980). Dir: Mike Hodges. Cast: Sam Jones (as Flash), Melody Anderson, Topol, Max Von Sydow, Ornella Muti. 110 mins.

Superman II (1980). Dir: Richard Lester. Cast: Christopher Reeve, Margot Kidder, Gene Hackman, Ned Beatty, Valerie Perrine, Jack O'Halloran, Sarah Douglas, Terence Stamp. 127 mins.

Swamp Thing (1982). Dir: Wes Craven. Cast: Adrienne Barbeau, Louis Jourdan, Nicholas Worth, David Hess, Ben Bates, Dick Durock (Swamp Thing), Ray Wise (Alex Holland). 90 mins.

Superman III (1983). Dir: Richard Lester. Cast: Christopher Reeve, Margot Kidder, Richard Vaughn, Richard Pryor, Annette O'Toole. 124 mins.

Supergirl (1984). Dir: Jean-Pierre Schward. Cast: Helen Slater (Supergirl), Faye Dunaway, Peter Cook, Branda Vaccaro.

Sheena

Phew! I've plum run out of words after all that. If any one else has a searching, in-depth question like that last one, send it to another magazine, okay?

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